Alphonse
MUCHA

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Patrick Bade and Victoria Charles

Alphonse Mucha

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BERNHARDT

ART NOUVEAU

Biscuits
CHAMPAGNE
BISCUITS CHAMPAGNE
Lefèvre-Utile
LEFÈVRE-UTILE
CHAMPAGNE
LU
BISCUITS
Mucha
F. CHAMPENOIS, PARIS

The Origins of Art Nouveau

"One can argue the merits and the future of the new decorative art movement, but there is no denying it currently reigns triumphant over all Europe and in every English-speaking country outside Europe; all it needs now is management, and this is up to men of taste." (Jean Lahor, Paris 1901)

Art Nouveau sprang from a major movement in the decorative arts that first appeared in Western Europe in 1892, but its birth was not quite as spontaneous as is commonly believed. Decorative ornament and furniture underwent many changes between the waning of the Empire style around 1815 and the 1889 Universal Exposition in Paris celebrating the centennial of the French Revolution. For example, there were distinct revivals of Restoration, Louis-Philippe, and Napoleon III furnishings still on display at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris. Tradition (or rather imitation) played too large a role in the creation of these different period styles for a single trend to emerge and assume a unique mantle. Nevertheless, there were some artists during this period that sought to distinguish themselves from their predecessors by expressing their own decorative ideal.

What then did the new decorative art movement stand for in 1900? In France, as elsewhere, it meant that people were tired of the usual repetitive forms and methods, the same old decorative clichés and banalities, the eternal imitation of furniture from the reigns of monarchs named Louis (Louis XIII to XVI), and furniture from the Renaissance and Gothic periods. It meant designers finally asserted the art of their own time as their own. Up until 1789 (the end of the Ancien Régime), style had advanced by reign; this era wanted its own style. And (at least outside of France) there was a yearning for something more: to no longer be slaves to foreign fashion, taste, and art. It was an urge inherent in the era's awakening nationalism, as each country tried to assert independence in literature and in art.

In short, there was a push everywhere towards a new art that was neither a servile copy of the past nor an imitation of foreign taste.

There was also a real need to recreate decorative art, simply because there had been none since the turn of the century. In each preceding era, decorative art had not merely existed; it had flourished gloriously. In the past, everything from people's clothing and weapons, right down to the slightest domestic object – from andirons,

Mucha in his studio,
rue du Val-de-Grâce,
Paris, c. 1898. (p. 6)

Biscuits Champagne Lefèvre-Utile, 1896.
Colour lithograph, 52.1 x 35.2 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Gismonda, 1894.
Colour lithograph, 216 x 74.2 cm.
Mucha Museum,Prague. (p. 10)

Cassan Fils (print shop), 1895.
Colour lithograph, 174.7 x 68.4 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 10)

The Seasons: Summer, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 73 x 32 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 11)

La Dame aux camélias, 1896.
Colour lithograph, 207.3 x 72.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p.11)

GISMONDA
BERNHARDT
THÉATRE DE LA RENAISSANCE
Mucha
IMPRIMERIES LEMERCIER, PARIS.

IMPRIMERIE
CASSAN FILS
FONDEE en 1851
IMPRESSIONS DE LUXE
ARTISTIQUES & COMMERCIALES
RAMIER DU CHARTERU
TOULOUSE
Mucha

Mucha

LA·DAME·
AUX·CAMELIAS
SARAH BERNHARDT
THÉATRE DE LA
RENAISSANCE
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. PARIS

bellows, and chimney backs, to a drinking cup – were duly decorated: each object had its own ornamentation and finishing touches, its own elegance and beauty. But the 19th century had concerned itself with little other than function; ornament, finishing touches, elegance, and beauty were superfluous. At once both grand and miserable, the 19th century was as "deeply divided" as Pascal's human soul. The century that ended so lamentably in brutal disdain for justice among peoples had opened in complete indifference to decorative beauty and elegance, maintaining for the greater part of one hundred years a singular paralysis when it came to aesthetic feeling and taste.

The return of once-abolished aesthetic feeling and taste also helped bring about Art Nouveau. France had come to see through the absurdity of the situation and was demanding imagination from its stucco and fine plaster artists, its decorators, furniture makers, and even architects, asking all these artists to show some creativity and fantasy, a little novelty and authenticity. And so there arose new decoration in response to the new needs of new generations.

The definitive trends capable of producing a new art would not materialise until the 1889 Universal Exposition. There the English asserted their own taste in furniture; American silversmiths Graham and Augustus Tiffany applied new ornament to items produced by their workshops; and Louis Comfort Tiffany revolutionised the art of stained glass with his glassmaking. An elite corps of French artists and manufacturers exhibited works that likewise showed noticeable progress: Emile Gallé sent furniture of his own design and decoration, as well as coloured glass vases in which he obtained brilliant effects through firing; Clément Massier, Albert Dammouse, and Auguste Delaherche exhibited flambé stoneware in new forms and colours; and Henri Vever, Boucheron and Lucien Falize exhibited silver and jewellery that showed new refinements. The trend in ornamentation was so advanced that Falize even showed everyday silverware decorated with embossed kitchen herbs.

The examples offered by the 1889 Universal Exposition quickly bore fruit; everything was culminating into a decorative revolution. Free from the prejudice of high art, artists sought new forms of expression. In 1891 the French Societé Nationale des Beaux-Arts established a decorative arts division which, although negligible in its first year, was significant by the Salon of 1892, when works in pewter by Jules Desbois, Alexandre Charpentier, and Jean Baffier were exhibited for the first time. And the Société des Artistes Français, initially resistant to decorative art, was forced to allow the inclusion of a special section devoted to decorative art objects in the Salon of 1895.

It was on 22nd December that same year that Siegfried Bing, returning from an assignment in the United States, opened a shop named Art Nouveau in his townhouse on Rue Chauchat, which Louis Bonnier had adapted to contemporary taste. The rise of Art

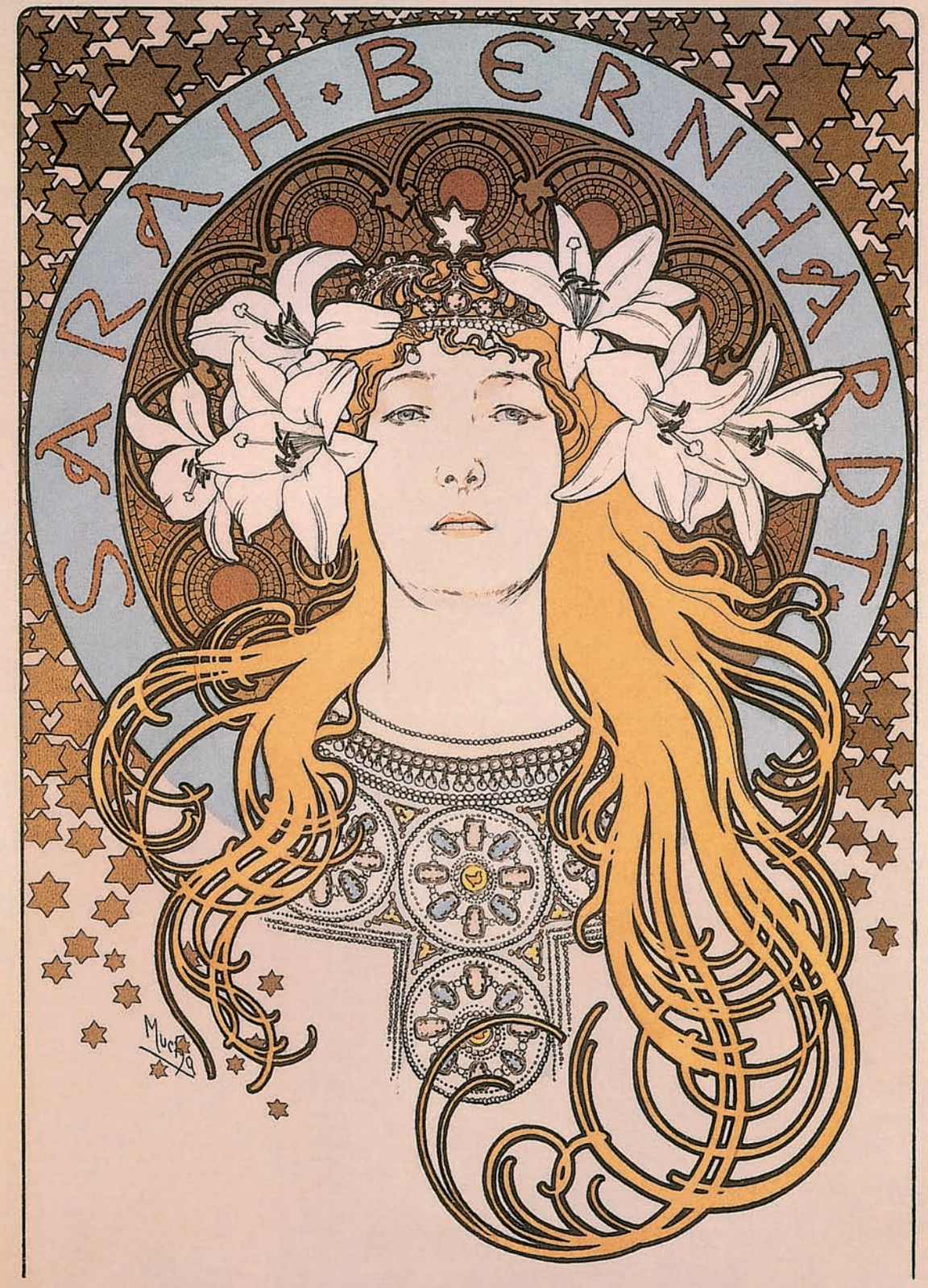
L'Estampe Moderne: Salomé (detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 40.6 x 30.7 cm.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

Poster for *Salon des Cent: 20th Exposition* (detail), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 63 x 43 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 14)

Poster for «*The Cigarette Poster Job*», 1896.
Colour lithograph, 66.7 x 46.4 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 15)

SALON
des

JOB
F. CHAMPENOIS
PARIS
Mucha



Imprimé pour "L'ÉDITION D'ART" par F. CHAMPENOIS

Nouveau was no less remarkable abroad. In England, Liberty shops, Essex wallpaper, and the workshops of Merton-Abbey and the Kelmscott-Press under the direction of William Morris (for whom Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane provided designs) were extremely popular. The trend even spread to London's Grand Bazaar (Maple & Co), which offered Art Nouveau to its clientele as its own designs were going out of fashion.

In Brussels, the first exhibition of La Libre Esthétique opened in February 1894, reserving a large space for decorative displays, and in December of the same year, the Maison d'art (established in the former townhouse of prominent Belgian lawyer Edmond Picard) opened its doors to buyers in Brussels, gathering the whole of European decorative art under one roof, as produced by celebrated artists and humble backwater workshops alike. More or less simultaneous movements in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and Denmark (including Royal Copenhagen porcelain) had won over the most discriminating collectors well before 1895.

The expression "Art Nouveau" was henceforth part of the contemporary vocabulary, but the two words failed to designate a uniform trend capable of giving birth to a specific style. In reality, Art Nouveau varied by country and prevailing taste.

As we shall see, the revolution started in England where, at the outset, it truly was a national movement. Indeed, nationalism and cosmopolitanism are two aspects of the trend that we will discuss at length. Both are evident and in conflict in the arts, and while both are justifiable trends, they both fail when they become too absolute and exclusive. For example, what would have happened to Japanese art if it had not remained national? And yet Gallé and Tiffany were equally correct to completely break with tradition.

England: Cradle of Art Nouveau

In the architecture of its palaces, churches, and homes, England was overrun with the neoclassical style based on Greek, Roman, and Italianate models. Some thought it absurd to reproduce the Latin dome of Rome's Saint Peter's Cathedral in the outline of Saint Paul's Cathedral, its Protestant counterpart in smoky, foggy London, along with colonnades and pediments after Greece and Rome, and eventually England revolted, happily returning to English art.

The revolution occurred thanks to its architects, first to A.W.N. Pugin, who contributed to the design of the Houses of Parliament, and later to a whole group of mostly Pre-Raphaelite artists who more or less favoured pre-pagan art of the 16th century, before the classicising trend which was so hostile in its origins and its nature to English tradition.

Sarah Bernhardt as Princess Lointaine: Poster for the magazine *La Plume*, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 69 x 51 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Spring (from the *Seasons* series), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 103 x 54 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 18)

Summer (from the *Seasons* series), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 103 x 54 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 19)

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The main proponents of the new decorative art movement were John Ruskin and William Morris: Ruskin, for whom art and beauty were a passionate religion, and Morris, of great heart and mind, by turns and simultaneously an admirable artist and poet, who made so many things and so well, whose wallpapers and fabrics transformed wall decoration (leading him to establish a production house) and who was also the head of his country's Socialist Party.

With Ruskin and Morris among the originators, let's not forget the leaders of the new movement: Philip Webb, architect, and Walter Crane, the period's most creative and appealing decorator, who was capable of exquisite imagination, fantasy, and elegance. Around them and following them arose and was formed a whole generation of amazing designers, illustrators, and decorators who, as in a pantheistic dream, married a wise and charming fugue to a delicate melody of lines composed of decorative caprices of flora and fauna, both animal and human.

In their art and technique of ornamentation, tracery, composition, and arabesques, as well as through their cleverness and boundless ingenuity, the English Art Nouveau designers recall the exuberant and marvellous master ornamentalists of the Renaissance. No doubt they knew the Renaissance ornamentalists and closely studied them, as they studied the contemporaneous School of Munich, in all the 15th and 16th century engravings that we undervalue today, and in all the Munich school's niello, copper, and woodcrafts. Although they often transposed the work of the past, the English Art Nouveau designers never copied it with a timid and servile hand, but truly infused it with feeling and the joy of new creation.

If you need convincing, look at old art magazines, such as *Studio*, *Artist*, or the *Magazine of Art,* where you will find (in issues of *Studio* especially) designs for decorative bookplates, bindings, and all manner of decoration. Note in the competitions sponsored by *Studio* and *South Kensington*, what rare talent is revealed among so many artists. The new wallpapers, fabrics, and prints that transformed our interior decoration may have been created by Morris, Crane, and Charles Voysey as they dreamed primarily of nature, but they were also thinking about the true principles of ornamentation as had been traditionally taught and applied in the Orient and in Europe in the past by authentic master decorators.

Finally, it was English architects using native ingenuity and artistry who restored the English art of old, revealing the simple charm of English architecture from the Queen Anne period, and from the 16th to the 18th centuries in England. Quite appropriately they introduced into this revival of their art – given the similarity between the climates, countries, customs, and a certain common origin – the architectural and decorative forms of Northern Europe, the colourful architecture of the region, where from Flanders to the Baltic, grey stone was subordinate to brick and red tile, whose tonality so complements the particular robust green of the trees, lawns, and meadows of northern prairies.

Study for "*Zodiac*", 1896.
Pencil, ink, and watercolour,
65.7 x 48.2 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

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Bières de la Meuse
Mucha
BAR-LE-DUC
ANC. CAVES DU ROY-SEVRES
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. PARIS

Now, the majority of these architects saw no shame in being both architects and decorators, in fact achieving perfect harmony between the exterior and the interior decoration of a house by any other means was unfathomable. Inside, they sought harmony as well by composing with furnishings and tapestries to create an ensemble of new co-ordinated forms and colours that were soft, subdued, and calm.

Among the most highly respected were Norman Shaw, Thomas Edward Collcut, and the firm of Ernest George and Harold Ainsworth Peto. These architects restored what had been missing: the subordination of all the decorative arts to architecture, a subordination without which it would be impossible to create any style.

We certainly owe them such novelties as pastel decor (as in the 18th century domestic interior) and the return of architectural ceramics (likely Oriental in origin), which they had studied and with which they had much greater skill and mastery than anyone else, given their constant contact with it. Thanks to these architects, bright colours like peacock blue and sea green started to replace the dismal greys, browns, and other sad colours that were still being used to make already ugly administrative buildings even more hideous.

The reform of architecture and decorative art in England was therefore national at first. This is not immediately obvious, however, in the work of Morris. But it was the fundamental inclination of this artist and (whether consciously or not) of those in his orbit, who like him passionately embraced English art and history as their own. It meant a return to profiles, colours, and forms that were no longer Greek, Latin, or Italian: an art that was English rather than classical.

Along with wallpaper and tapestries there was truly English furniture being designed that was new and modern, often with superb lines, and English interiors often displayed decorative ensembles with equally superb layouts, configurations, and colours.

Finally, throughout England, there was a desire to go back and redo everything from overall structural ornamentation, the house, and furniture, right down to the humblest domestic object. At one point even a hospital was decorated, an idea retained by the English and later adopted in France.

From England, the movement spread to neighbouring Belgium.

Belgium: The Flowering of Art Nouveau

Belgium has long recognised the talent of its most famous architect, Victor Horta, along with that of Paul Hankar and Henry Van de Velde, and the furniture maker and decorator

Bières de la Meuse, 1897.
Colour lithograph,154.5 x 104.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Autumn (from the *Seasons* series), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 103 x 54 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 24)

Winter (from the *Seasons* series), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 103 x 54 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 25)

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Gustave Serrurier-Bovy, one of the founders of the Liège School. Art Nouveau owes much to these four artists, who were less conservative than their Flemish counterparts and mostly unassociated with any tradition whatsoever. Horta, Van de Velde, and Hankar introduced novelties to their art that were carefully studied and freely reproduced by foreign architects, which brought great renown to the Belgians, even though the reproductions were executed with slightly less confidence and a somewhat heavier hand.

These four had a great impact. Unfortunately, much of their impact was due to students and copyists (as is often the case with masters) who were sometimes immoderate, exhibiting a taste that comprised the masters.

This first became noticeable in relation to Horta and Hankar, even though Horta and Hankar had initially employed their decorative vocabulary of flexible lines, undulating like ribbons of algae or broken and coiling like the linear caprices of ancient ornamentalists, with restraint, distributing it with precision and in moderation. Among imitators, however, the lines grew wild, making the leap from ironwork and a few wall surfaces to overrun the whole house and all its furniture.

The result was seen in torsions, in dances forming a delirium of curves; obsessive in appearance and often torture to the eyes. The love of tradition was not as strong in Belgium as it was in England and Belgian artists were preoccupied with discovering new and comfortable interior designs. However successfully they met that challenge, however pleasing the interior arrangements, however unexpected the curves seemed, the new decor still had to be enlivened to satisfy the Flemish taste for abundance and elaborate decoration.

Serrurier-Bovy started by imitating English furniture, but eventually his own personality emerged. Nevertheless, his creations, which for the most part excelled in novelty, generally remained more restrained than the work of subsequent Belgian artists.

These Belgians were no less talented and imaginative but, in order to make their work more impressive, they exaggerated linear decoration in the leitmotif of the line. Curved, broken, or cursive, in the form of the whiplash, zigzag, or dash, the leitmotif of the line would reach a level of contagion by the 1900 Universal Exposition.

If we linger over the Belgian artists, it is because of the important role they played in the renewal of the decorative arts, especially furniture. In this, Belgium, for better or worse, deserves as much credit as England. From England and Belgium, the movement then extended to the northern countries and to France, the United States , and Germany.

It is true that Germany needed these decorations to help make its Art Nouveau pillars and its geometric furniture decorated with rigid mouldings borrowed from ancient Greek monuments more palpable.

Cover for Chansons d'aïeules, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 33 x 25 cm.
Collection of Victor Arwas, London.

Amants, 1895.
Colour lithograph, 106.5 x 137 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 28-29)

CHANSONS D'AÏEULES
DITES
par
Mucha
MADAME AMEL
de la Comédie Française.
F. Champenois, Paris.

Mucha
LES PLUS GRANDES
AFFICHES-CAMIS
PARIS
MACHINES DU MONDE

amant
EDIE DE M. DONNAY
héâtre de la renaissance

Displaying the individual character that comes from local resources, customs, and taste, Art Nouveau then also appeared in Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands.

At no point did England, the Netherlands, or Germany excel in statuary, which almost completely disappeared from their versions of Art Nouveau. In order to entertain the eye their artists instead gave precedence to shiny brass decoration cut in the form of openwork arabesques and attached to woods that were either naturally rich in colour or artificially highlighted.

France: A Passion for Art Nouveau

The passion for Art Nouveau was different in France. Instead of decorating with schematically stylised flora and fauna, French artists concentrated on embellishing new forms with sculpted ornamentation that retained the flower's natural grace and showed the figure to best advantage. This was already the focus of French exhibitors in 1889.

But those artists were looking for novelty in absolute realism. Their successors remembered that the refined art of the 18th century had derived its charm from the free interpretation of nature, not its rigorous imitation.

The best among the artist craftsmen endeavoured to instil their designs with the gentle harmony of line and form found in old French masterpieces and to decorate them with all the novelty that the rich and vibrant flora and fauna could provide when freely interpreted.

Although the best furniture makers, such as Charles Plumet, Tony Selmersheim, Louis Sorel, and Eugène Gaillard, had little use for sculpture, it was sometimes a handy aid, as seen in certain ensembles by Jules Desbois and Alexandre Charpentier. By employing freely interpreted flora and the human figure, these two designers (who also designed stunning contemporary jewellery) were able to produce dynamic new poetic effects in which shadow and light played an important role.

Such was also the case with René Lalique, whose works evoked exquisite fantasies, or the more robust jewels executed by Jean-Auguste Dampt, Henry Nocq, and François-Rupert Carabin, for example. French objects such as these were more sumptuous and more powerfully affecting than the graphic rebuses seen in Brussels and Berlin.

Art Nouveau exploded in Paris in 1895, a year that opened and closed with important milestones. In January, the poster designed by Alphonse Mucha for Sarah Bernhardt in the role of Gismonda was plastered all over the capital.

The Months Postcard: *December*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

This was the event that heralded the Art Nouveau poster style, which Eugène Grasset had previously tackled, in particular in his posters for *Encres Marquets* (1892) and the *Salon des Cent* (1894). Then December saw the opening of Bing's Art Nouveau boutique, which was entirely devoted to propagating the new genre.

It was also around this time that Hector Guimard built Castel Béranger (c. 1890). Two years later, Baron Edouard Empain, the engineer and financer of the Paris Metro construction project, selected Guimard to design the now famous Metro stations. Empain's choice, however, was strongly opposed at the time.

Some feared that Guimard's architecture represented too new an art form and that the style, derided as *style nouille* (literally translated "noodle style"), would ruin the look of the French capital. An obstinate jury prevented Guimard from completing all the stations, in particular the station near Garnier's Opéra: Art Nouveau appeared totally at odds with Garnier's style, which was a perfect example of the historicism and eclecticism the new movement was fighting against.

At the same time, French brasseries and restaurants offered themselves as privileged sites for the development of the new trend. The Buffet de la Gare de Lyon opened in 1901. Rechristened Le Train Bleu in 1963, it counted Coco Chanel, Sarah Bernhardt, and Colette among its many regulars.

With the addition of Maxim's restaurant on the Rue Royale, dining establishments henceforth became perfect models of Art Nouveau.

In 1901, the Alliance des Industries d'Art, also known as the École de Nancy (School of Nancy), was officially founded. In accordance with Art Nouveau principles, its artists wanted to abolish the hierarchies that existed between major arts like painting and sculpture and the decorative arts, which were then considered minor.

The School of Nancy artists, whose most fervent representatives were Emile Gallé, the Daum brothers (Auguste and Antonin) and Louis Majorelle, produced floral and plant stylisations, expressions of a precious and fragile world that they nevertheless wanted to see industrially reproduced and distributed on a much larger scale, beyond coteries of galleries and collectors.

Art Nouveau ultimately proliferated endemically throughout the world, often through the intermediary of art magazines such as *The Studio*, *Arts et Idées* and *Art et Décoration*, whose illustrations were henceforth enhanced with photos and colour lithography. As the trend spread from one country to the next, it changed by integrating local colour, transforming itself into a different style according to the city it was in.

The Months Postcard: *July*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Art Nouveau at the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris

History has selected England, Belgium, and France as the undisputed primary sources of Art Nouveau's development in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but contemporaries were unaware of this supremacy. In its section devoted to the decorative arts, the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris, which called for the construction of both the Grand and Petit Palais, among other buildings, offered a sampling that gave a taste of the real flavour of the period. For example, Gaudí, now inseparable from Spanish Art Nouveau and a major architect who gave us the image of Barcelona we know today, was the Exposition's major no-show: he failed to participate in the construction of the pavilions and none of his plans were shown. At the same time, countries such as Russia, Hungary, and Romania, long since forgotten in the history of Art Nouveau, were well represented alongside other countries that history wrongly seems to barely remember.

The French Pavilion

France showed great artistic merit in bijouterie, joaillerie, ceramics, and glassware – all magical arts of fire – as well as in sculpture and medallions. The triumph of France in all of these arts was unmistakable.

In the enchanting art of glass, one of the world's oldest arts, and one that seemed to have exhausted every conceivable combination of line and colour, every quest for a perfect union between stones, precious metals, and enamel, between chasing and the gluing of precious stones and pearls, Lalique was a genius who could surprise, dazzle, and delight the eye with new and truly exquisite colourations in all his creations, with the fantasy and the charm of his imagination with which he animated them, and with his bold and inexhaustible creativity. Like a philosopher grading stones on their artistic value alone, sometimes elevating the most humble to the highest honours and drawing unfamiliar effects from the most familiar, and like a magician who can pull something out of thin air, Lalique was a tireless and perpetual inventor of new forms and beauties, who truly created an art form in his own style, which now and forever bears his name.

As is the prerogative of genius, Lalique steered his art into unchartered territory and others followed whatever direction he took. There was joy and pride at the triumphant manifestation of French taste in its plateresque palace, thanks to the masters of French bijouterie, joaillerie, and silver, such as Lalique, Alexis Falize, Henri Vever, Fernand Thesmar, and many others, all

Decorative Plate with Symbol of Paris, 1897.
Ceramic, diameter: 31 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Byzantine Heads: Brunette, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 34.5 x 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 36)

Byzantine Heads: Blonde, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 34.5 x 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 37)

Mucha

relatively prestigious, and thanks to the masters of glass and ceramics, such as the still unrivalled Gallé, the Daum brothers, and the artists of the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, and Albert Dammouse, Auguste Delaherche, Pierre Adrien Dalpeyrat, and Lesbros among others.

It was a splendid victory for Art Nouveau as a new decorative art movement, given what Lalique and the other French masters set out to accomplish. They had endeavoured to free themselves from imitation, from the eternal copy, from the old clichés and plaster casts that were always being recycled and had already been seen and were now overly familiar and worn-out. Their work was new, even to them. These masters on the Esplanade des Invalides therefore deserve our utmost gratitude, because in this exhibition they made certain that France's artistic supremacy would be revealed once and for all. The French exhibitors included the artists of the Manufacture nationale de Sèvres, whose revitalised works of perfect beauty may have saved the life and the honour of French manufacturers; other masters of the applied arts; and no doubt a few practitioners of the fine arts, whose work did not always display the same quality as the work of the minor artists they were so contemptuous of. But whatever one's opinion of the new decorative art, similar victories were henceforth more and more difficult to win, as France's steady rivals made even greater strides.

The English Pavilion

Art Nouveau was already brilliantly represented in England by 1878, especially in furniture. The movement was in its early stages, but England and Belgium, for various reasons, were underrepresented at the 1900 Exposition in Paris.

English furniture was only prominently displayed by Mr Waring and Robert Gillow and by Ambrose Heal.

For every few well-conceived pieces displaying an elegance that was truly new, there were countless others that were overly contorted and ornate, in ugly colours and poorly adapted to function, or designed with such excessive simplicity and pretence that English furniture was seriously compromised in the eyes of critiques – and everyone else. One could grope and search about, but with a few exceptions, the furniture was too often imperfectly designed – without logic and serious purpose, a structural frame, or even comfort in mind. These criticisms, however were perhaps best directed less at England and Belgium than to other foreign countries.

England failed to show anything really new or exceptional that year. And yet there was one perfect example of its highly developed artistic mastery: the little pavilion that housed the miniature fleet of the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company, a supremely elegant piece owing to the collaboration of Collcutt (architect), Moira (wall decoration), and Jenkins (sculptures).

La Plume, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 24.5 x 18 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Fruit, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 66.2 x 44.4 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 40)

Flower, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 66.2 x 44.4 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 41)

N° 199 — 1er Août 1897

LA PLUME

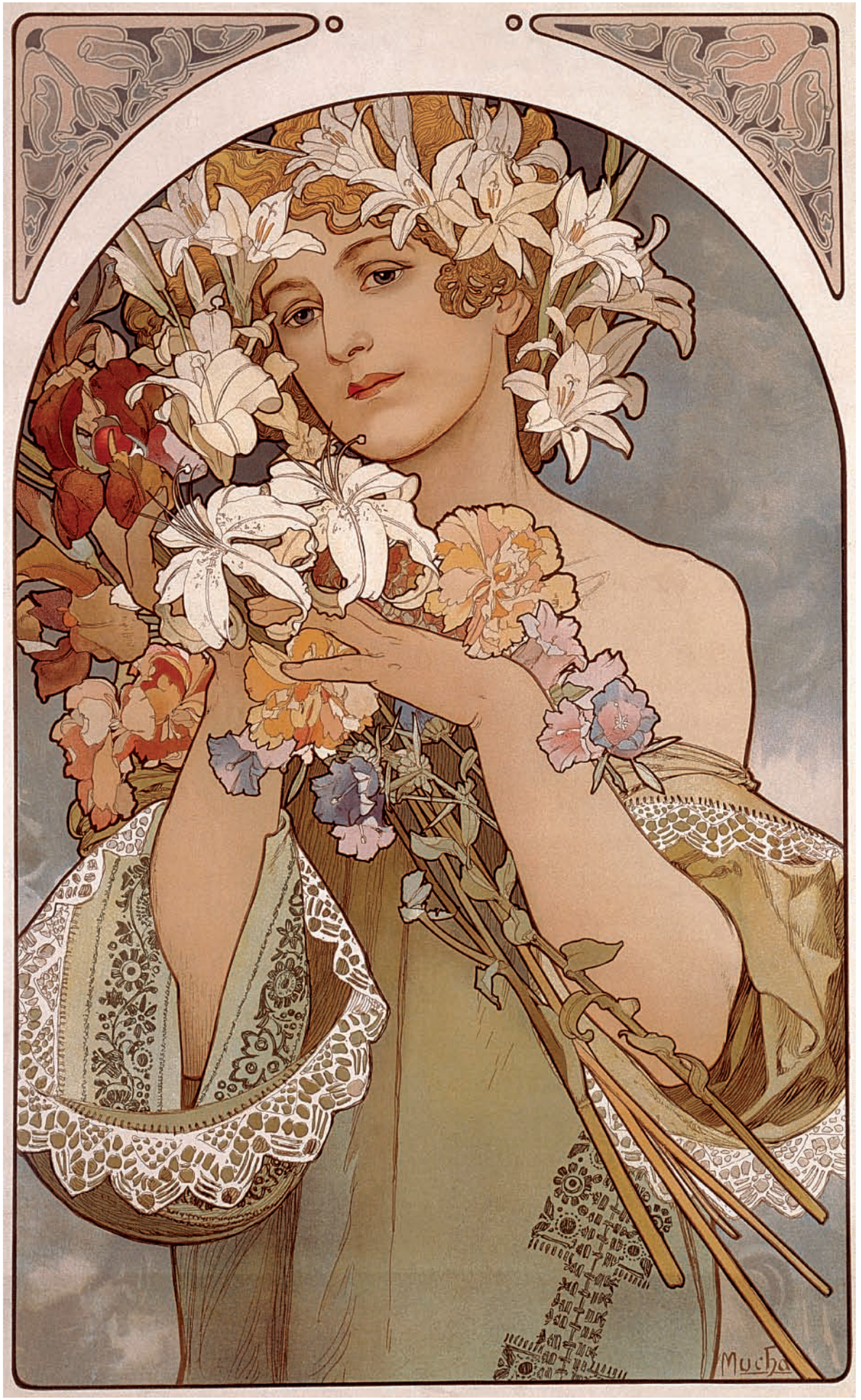
3e FASCICULE

DU

Numéro exceptionnel consacré à MUCHA

Imp. Ve Vaugirard G. de M. & Cie, Paris.

Mucha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MONACO·MONTE-CARLO
CHEMINS DE FER P.L.M.
Billets d'Aller & Retour_Billets Circulaires
Billets d'Aller & Retour collectifs de famille à prix réduits.
TRAJET en 16 HEURES par TRAINS DE LUXE
Mucha
1897

The American Pavilion

The decorative arts owe much to the United States, at least to the admirable New York artist Louis Comfort Tiffany, who truly revived the art of glass, as did Gallé in France but with different techniques. Like the brilliant artist from Nancy, Tiffany was not satisfied with being a prestigious glass artist: he was also a silversmith and ornamentalist. Above all he was a great poet, in the sense that he was continually inventing and creating beauty. For his young country, bursting with energy and brimming with wealth, Tiffany seems to have dreamed of an art of unprecedented sumptuousness, only comparable to the luxurious art of Byzantium in its combination of gravitas and bedazzlement. Tiffany has provided us with much joy. One senses his desire to revive lost grandeur and to create new splendours such as had never been seen before. He meant for his mosaics to create a sense of wonder when they decorated stairways and adorned residences. Such homes would be illuminated by day with dazzling and opalescent Tiffany windows and by night with Tiffany lamps and chandeliers, splendid and calm like mysterious stars; in such settings Tiffany glass would emit sparkling beams as if shot from precious stones or would filter in the tender, milky, lunar gleam of the light of dawn or of dusk. Tiffany was among the biggest winners of this Exposition, along with certain French masters, the Danes, and the Japanese.

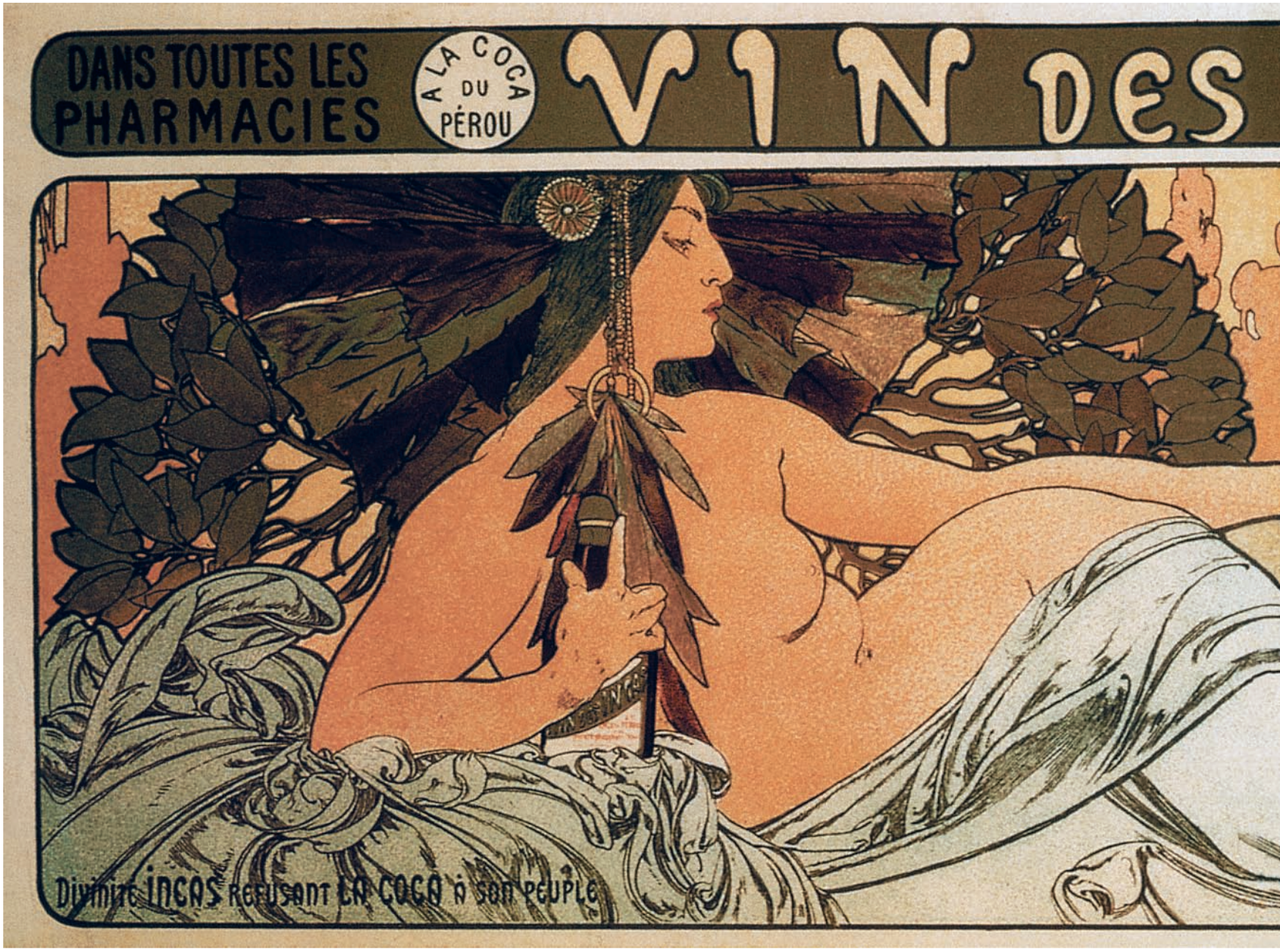
The Belgian Pavilion

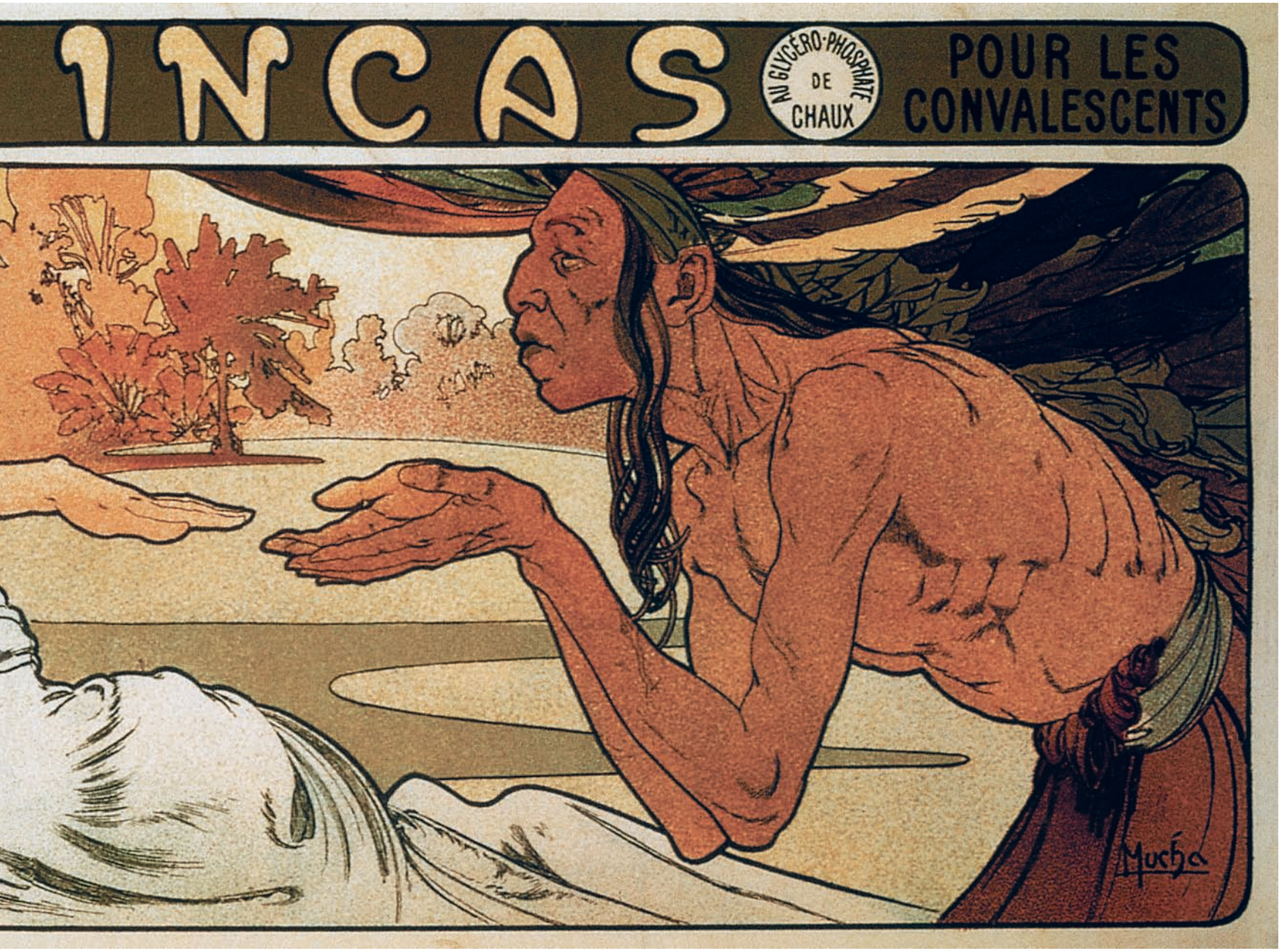
Belgium was entitled to a large space at the exposition, due to the respect and interest it attracted on account of its traditions, its history, and its connection with Art Nouveau issues, pursuits, and curiosities, indeed on account of all its artistic and industrial labour, which was great for such a small nation.

Unfortunately, Belgium exhibited little; even the exhibit at the Grand Palais failed to include the worthy Belgian school of sculpture. This was a lively and passionate school with many excellent artists that are honoured today, the foremost being Constantin Meunier, a moving master of noble simplicity and a poet of stoic and heroic human labour (like his counterpart Millet in France) and a master of human compassion (like his counterparts Jozef Israels and Fritz von Uhde). At least Belgium's undeniable and major influence on Art Nouveau made itself felt throughout the Exposition. But Serrurier-Bovy, Théo Van Rysselbergh, Armand Rassenfosse, and many others, especially Horta, Hankar, and Georges Hobé generated a lot of comment by their absence in the Palais des Invalides and the Palais des Beaux-Arts.

What was nevertheless very beautiful, and worthy of the new Belgian art, was Franz Hooseman's silver work and Philippe Wolfer's bijouterie. Also highly interesting were Bock's ceramics (especially the delicate artist's lively stoneware masks) and Isidore de Rudder's sculpture.

Monaco Monte Carlo, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 110.5 x 76.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.


DANS TOUTES LES PHARMACIES
A LA COCA DU PÉROU
VIN DES
Divinité INCAS REFUSANT LA COCA à SON PEUPLE



Vin des Incas, 1897.
Colour lithograph,13.6 x 36 cm.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

The German Pavilion

In the semi-absence of England and Belgium it was Germany (and perhaps France) that best represented Art Nouveau at the 1900 Universal Exposition. Germany's progress in decorative art was astonishing, and considering the country had stopped following and studying foreign artistic production, the revelation came as a surprise, almost a shock. Art Nouveau was the victor throughout Germany, from Berlin to Vienna. In Prussia, the style reflected imperial taste, no doubt somewhat heavy and massive, as the new Germany, now moving closer to Kaiserism, chose a decorative style reminiscent of French First Empire.

The minor gallant courts of 18th-century Germany had followed the French model, demanding nothing of art but frivolity, prettiness, and feminine charm and mannerisms – the delightful style of Madame Pompadour, which culminated in the Rococo and the Baroque. Later, at the start of the 20th century, it was necessary and made sense for the robust and serious German empire to adopt a solid and severe style.

Germany acquired a reputation for beautiful and elaborate wrought iron; a return to past traditions (such as painted façades and sculpted woodwork); and above all, its rich development (in every sense of the word) of its decorative art and its consistent attention to the decoration and preservation of its national architecture, for the Germans (like the English) were actively restoring their architectural heritage throughout German cities and provinces.

The movement in Germany therefore was also on the whole very national in orientation. Dominated by foreign influences throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, Germany had reconnected its present to its noble past and, in restoring cities like Hildesheim and Brunswick, among many others, with a great deal of respect and patriotism, it rightly rediscovered its taste for polychrome, painted façades, and the colourful sculpted wood, that, in places, made for such a charming decor.

But internationalism and cosmopolitanism triumphed in German furniture (especially in Austria, perhaps due to the artists of the Secession, who were under many foreign influences), where Germans executed Art Nouveau's famous dancing line with complete abandon, exuberance, and frenzy.

Rêverie, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 72.7 x 55.2 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Childhood from the Chocolat Masson Calendar, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 30 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 48)

Youth from the Chocolat Masson Calendar, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 30 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 49)

Yet, even in furniture, there was no less proof of renewed German taste and the highly charged and sometimes excellent new German awareness of decorative art. Germans demonstrated a fervent desire for decorative art, which they satisfied by thoroughly applying it everywhere, to everything, and for everybody.

As for wrought iron, the Germans, who were fond of techniques utilising fire, softened it, moulded it, shaped it, and worked wonders with it. The black vegetation and flowers that

Mucha

Mucha
Chocolat Mexicain

Chocolat Masson

SALON DES
Juin 1897
31 rue Bonaparte
Exposition de l'Œuvre
de
A. MUCHA
AFFICHES ARTISTIQUES DE LA PLUME, 31, RUE BONAPARTE, PARIS
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS, PARIS.
Mucha

they obtained, and all the sumptuous ironwork of German doors and gates, truly evoked the magnificence of ancient Germany.

The Germans also made extensive and highly skilled use of wood. The beautiful vaulted ceiling of Professor Riegelmann, which was made entirely of sculpted wood, represented an imitation of the ancient ceilings of the German and Swiss Renaissance, now dotted with electric lights for night.

Finally, the Germans exercised great artistry in their delightful application of mural painting and polychrome to the decoration of buildings and houses, for example, the slender and elegantly built Pavilion de la Rue des Nations, which was the brilliant work of the architect Johannes Radke, and also the reproduction of the Phare de Brême (Bremen Lighthouse) with its superbly decorated entrance. Whereas all of this was not absolutely new, it was justifiably revitalised, reclaimed from their national heritage, and outstanding in every way.

Yes, the Germans, too, had scored a wonderful artistic victory. They had, above all, demonstrated a most praiseworthy passion that rarely concerns us today: the desire to include art, decoration, and beauty in all things.

Compare the attention they brought to the task of fitting out and arraying their painting galleries to the almost careless indifference that France applied to preparing its own galleries and you will see the lesson to be learned here.

Among the deserving works remaining for discussion among the Exposition's German sections of applied art is the furniture of Spindler. With Spindler (as with the Nancy masters Gallé and Majorelle) one finds that the marquetry of his furniture is beautiful, whereas the line is somewhat less so, too often tentative or affected.

Spindler was an Alsatian who exercised astonishing mastery to great effect in his marquetry; possessing the skills of a painter, he put poetry and emotion into his wood panels.

Germany was also notable for beautiful electric chandeliers – a new genre of decorative art that the Germans (and the English) were typically adept at. The Exhibition's Bremen Lighthouse was decorated with motifs reflecting the function of the illuminated building. A splendid fixture with a shark and sea birds at the centre of a large crown and with electric globes suspended from fishing hooks, descending lightly like pearls, remains a stunning example. Was the artist thinking of the lavish crowns of the Visigoths? It would prove that a talented artist can always derive new and modern motifs from ancient themes if he really wants to.

Max Läuger's wall-hung fountains and ceramic chimneys were also extremely beautiful. The chimneys were English-style with enamelled plaques framing the fireplace recess, but in a dark green, severe style. In Germany, the large stove placed against the wall familiar to northern

Poster for *Salon des Cent Mucha Exhibition June 1897 , 1897.*
Colour lithograph, 66.2 x 46 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Hommage Respectueux de Nestlé (the Nestlé Company's tribute to Queen Victoria's 60th Jubilee), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 300 x 200 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 52-53)

countries had become a popular Art Nouveau motif, sometimes depicted in sunny interiors that were bright and dazzling due to the enamel and the copperware that decorated them.

In ceramics, one could admire new high-fire porcelain with pure enamel produced by the Royal Manufactory of Charlottenburg and the Meissen factory, and earthenware from the Mettlach factory.

German tradition dominated the sumptuous silver work of Professor Götz (from Karlsruhe) and Professors Heinrich Waderé, Fritz von Miller, and Petzold (from Munich), all worthy of renown.

The art of Bruckman, Deylhe, and Schnauer (from Hamburg) and Schmitz (from Cologne) was more modern.

Germany also exhibited beautiful stained glass windows, whose design, manufacture, and colour brought honour to Professor Geiger (from Fribourg), as well as Llebert (from Dresden), and Luthé (from Frankfurt).

As for glass, need we remind you of the exquisite work of the engraver Karl Köpping, who produced glasses on long, refined, slender stems like flowers, charming in both form and colour?

The Austrian Pavilion

Austrian art contrasted sharply with that of northern Germany. Whereas northern Germany's art was often severe and dreary, labouring under an excessive burden of discipline, Austrian art was rather pleasant and feminine.

In the Austria of Vienna, Art Nouveau was less nationalist and idiosyncratic than in northern Germany. A crossroads of many peoples where cosmopolitanism reigned, Vienna was necessarily dominated by its excellent School of Applied arts, directed by chevalier Salla, which showed work of the highest quality. The wonderful lace produced by the Herdlickas and by Miss Hoffmaninger, which was so innovative in its design and technique, is definitely worthy of the label Art Nouveau.

Monaco Monte Carlo (detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 110.5 x 76.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Adulthood from the Chocolat Masson Calendar, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 30 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 56)

Old Age from the Chocolat Masson Calendar, 1897.
Colour Lithograph, 30 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 57)

The Hungarian Pavilion

Hungary, still focused on independence, seemed to express a desire for artistic autonomy in relation to Vienna.

Proud of its glorious past, rich in ancient and wonderful treasures that radiated magnificent Oriental influences, Hungary, which had completed its new and beautiful

Chocolat Mexicain
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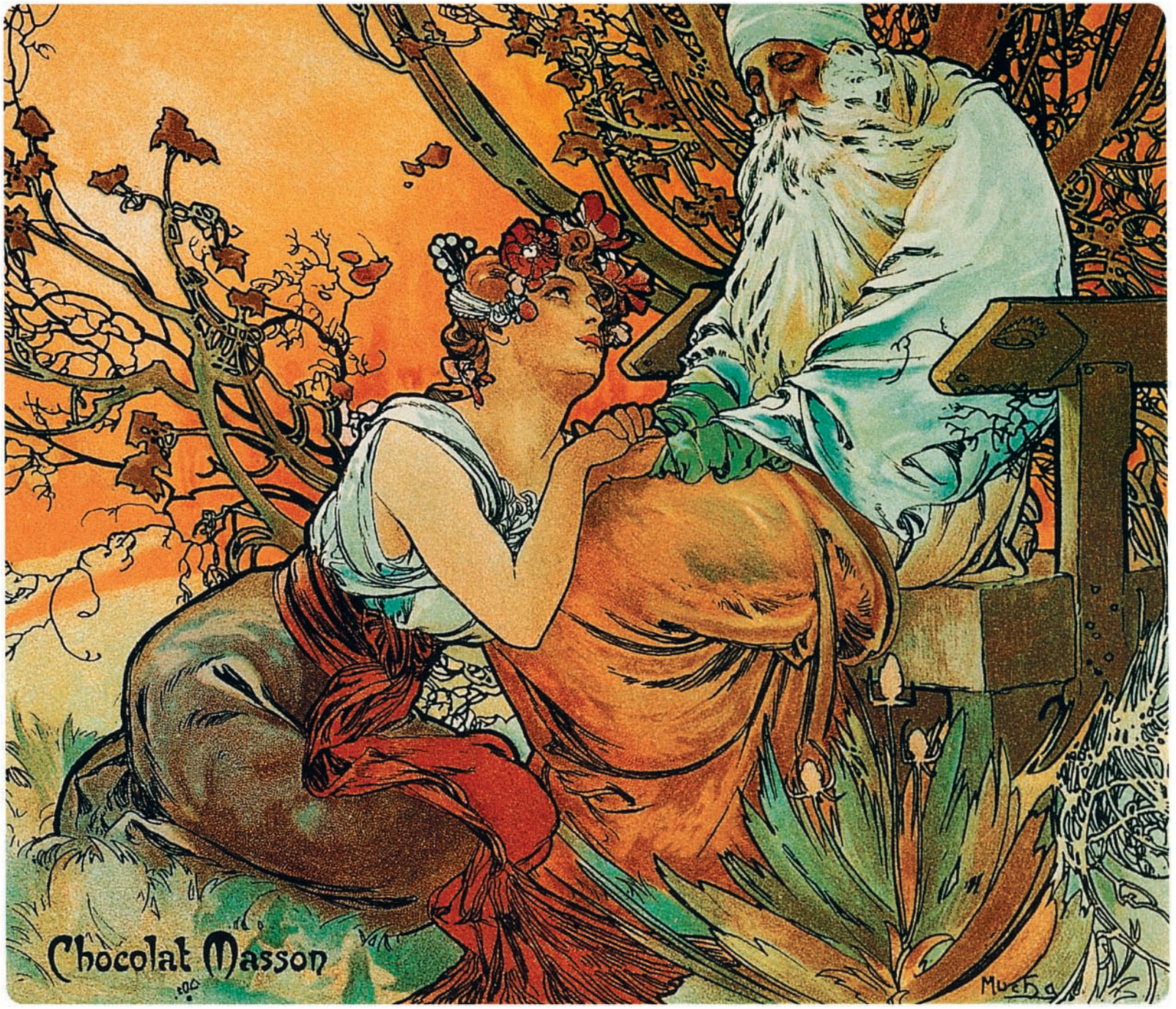
Chocolat Masson
Mucha

JANUARY
1905.
No. 152.
WIENER CHIC
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on 1st of every mouth
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Budapest Museum of Applied Arts under the active and highly intelligent direction of Jenö Radisics de Kutas, seemed still unable to decide between two different paths in art (and literature): the faithful preservation of its national tradition or the path to an art that was free. The latter choice had its merits, but it also had the drawback of building the same sumptuous and banal homes in Budapest as in Frankfurt, Vienna, and Berlin.

Like Romania, Hungary mined the depths of its past for decorative motifs that would enable it to establish an originality in art that was as pure and distinct as the uniqueness of its music and literature.

Hungary attracted attention at the Exposition primarily with its historical pavilion and the decor of its sections, as well as its earthenware, glazed stoneware, glass, and copper enamel. Beautiful coloured porcelain vases were a credit to the Herend Factory.

Miklos Zsolnay excelled in metallic reflections: in the polychrome surface of the vestibule leading to the recently created Museum of Applied Arts, the reddish-gold reflections of his glazed bricks produced a magnificent fiery effect. *Bapoport*'s new copper enamel work in blues and pinks was also exquisite and extremely fine.

There was too little on display from Bohemia, but it showed the same dual tendencies and Bohemia's School of Decorative Arts still wavered between them. Prague also had its own Museum of Applied Art and a National Museum, valued above all for an extraordinary collection of traditional popular costume.

Among the Bohemians, the following deserve mention: the iridescent glass manufactured by de Spaun that was inspired by the Favrile Glass and that made a version of Tiffany (certainly less refined) accessible to all; the decorative high-fire porcelain manufactured by Messrs Fisher and Mieg of Pirkenhammer, under the direction of a Frenchman named Carrière; and lastly, the Decorative School of Prague for its simple glazed earthenware, so lovely in form and decoration.

Thanks to the architecture of their pavilion and to the brilliant decorative talent of Alphonse Mucha (who drew and painted with fertile imagination, as passionately as a Gypsy playing the violin), Bosnia and Herzegovina, still completely Oriental, enjoyed great success at the Exposition. In spite of their political and social transformation, these countries had remained faithful to Oriental tradition in their art, and they would have been wrong to abandon it.

Cover of Wiener Chic (January), 1905.
Monochrome print, 44 x 33 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Language of Flowers (Byzantine)
(detail), c. 1900.
Colour lithograph, 29.8 x 223 cm.
Collection of Robert Allan Haas,
Kansas City. (pp. 60-61)

The Dutch Pavilion

The traditional decor of the Netherlands is so charming that it would have been a shame to want to change it. In the buildings of the early 20th century, in The Hague and in

Amsterdam, neo-Flemish taste, masterfully handled, usually triumphed. But the Netherlands also participated in the new movement, often with exceptional feeling. What a pity that the Netherlands failed to exhibit architectural drawings at the Exposition, because some of the houses in the new quarters being built near the museum had exquisite line and colouration: light touches of soft colour in the pale green hues that harmonise so well with brick. Department stores, boutiques, brasseries, and new cafes in Amsterdam and elsewhere boasted truly innovative ornament.

The fabric designs of Thorn Prikker, as well as those of Jan Toorop, were also of interest. These designers apparently based their peculiar visions of long, bony figurines on the strange, grimacing puppets among the Pantheon of characters in the Javanese Puppet Theatre, proving that Dutch taste was not always severe and Protestant. Dutch contact with the Far East may be a source of the imagination and fantasy that sometimes appears in Dutch forms and decoration. The Far East could also be the source of the forms and decoration produced by the Rozenburg factory in The Hague (later deservedly appointed royal manufacturer by the Queen) that gave Dutch porcelain – so exotic, intricately shaped and decorated, but also extremely beautiful, rare, and pure – its astonishing lightness. Dutch glazed clay pottery with polychrome decoration was also notable. Finally, Joost Thooft and Labouchère deserve acknowledgement for reviving the former Porceleyne Fles factory (especially Jacoba earthenware), thereby revitalising the art of Old Delft.

The Danish Pavilion

The Royal Copenhagen factory deserved every form of praise it received, as did the Bing and Gröndahl Porcelain Factory, which fearlessly went into competition and friendly conflict with Royal Copenhagen, but which, under the skilled and stern management of Willumsen, concentrated on plastic decorations. There is little that has not already been said about these porcelains, about their blue and white colourations, so soft, tender, and easy on the eye, about the decoration of the plates and vases, where the Danes with such taste and dexterity evoked Japan's delicate decoration even as they translated it. It was Sèvres that paid this Danish factory its greatest tribute by henceforth imitating it gloriously, but in a way that did both factories justice. Sèvres owed its own renaissance and resounding victory partly to the Danish factory. Certainly Sèvres surpassed its rival, but it was a rival from whom it had learned how to win. Royal Copenhagen porcelain long remained the undisputed artistic triumph of this gentle and noble country.

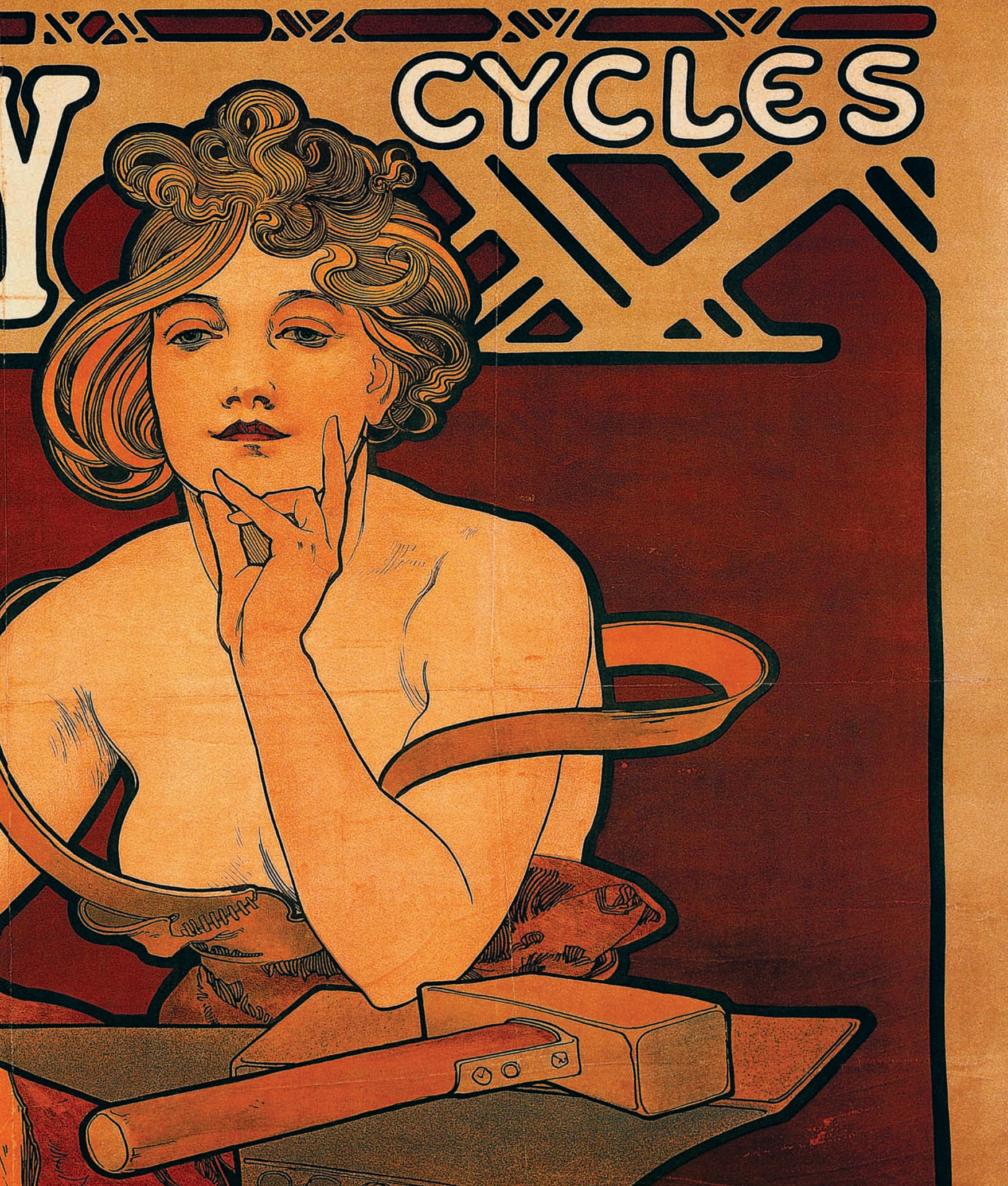
Job, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 149.2 x 101 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Waverley Cycles (detail), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 88.5 x 114 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 64-65)

But there were other examples of Danish artistry. Copenhagen's Town Hall, designed by Martin Nyrop, was then among the most beautiful in Europe, and its traditional, exceedingly pure style, with its thoroughly national decor, made it one of the most interesting, if not the most extraordinary building in Northern Europe.

JOB
JOB
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS, 66. Boul.d St Michel, PARIS

WAVERLE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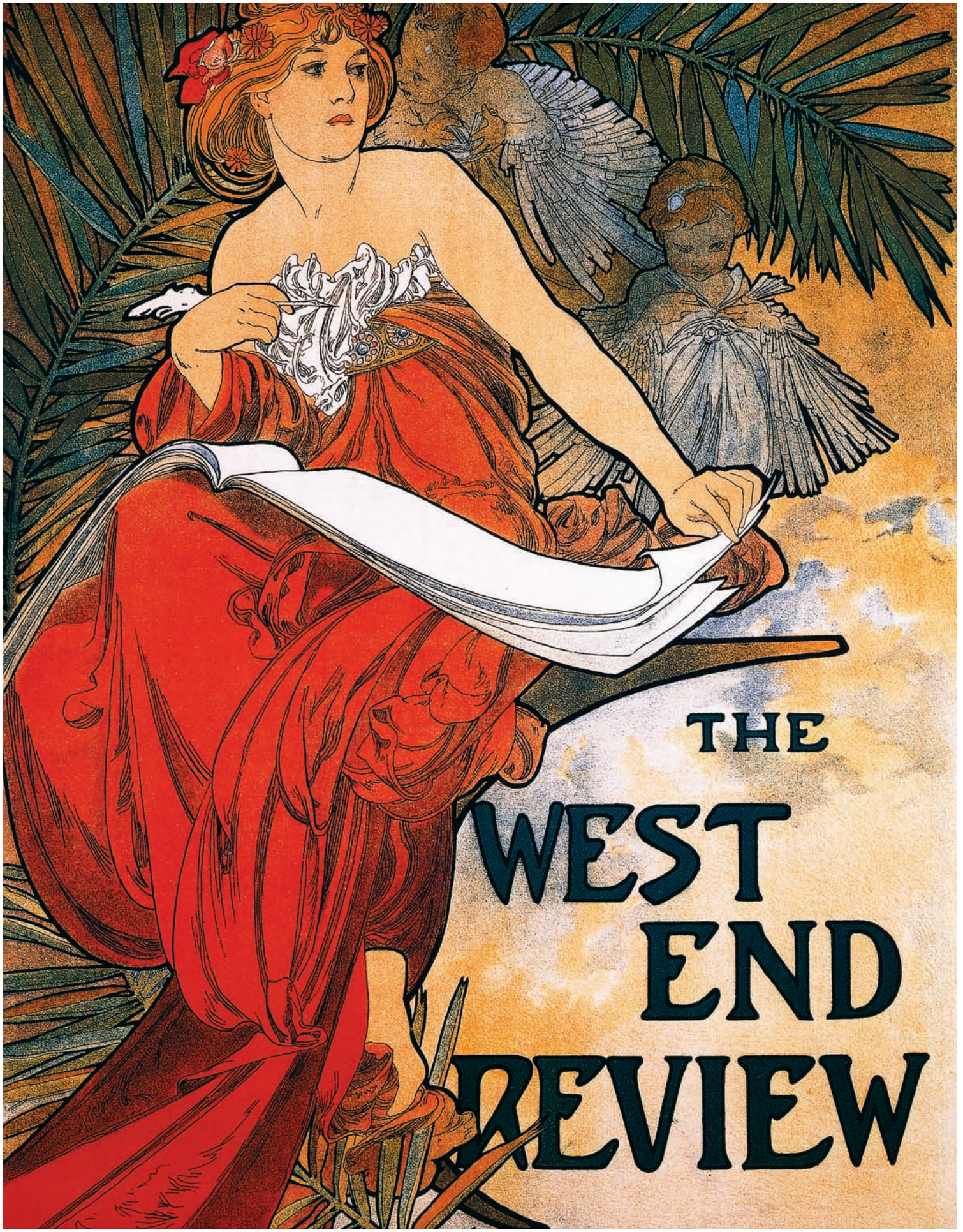

THE
WEST
END
REVIEW

The Swedish and Norwegian Pavilions

Sweden's contribution to the Exhibition was hardly an Art Nouveau revelation, although the movement had penetrated the country and was apparent in simple buildings, country homes, and railroad stations, sometimes with charming modernity. This rather disturbed the Swedish societies for industrial art had been established to encourage and maintain respect for Sweden's national tradition, and thus Art Nouveau met with some ambivalence.

Among the Scandinavian countries, Norway most faithfully upheld its artistic traditions and respected the spirit of its people.

Norway contributed some well-executed pieces of furniture that were among the best in the Exposition. These items were in the style of Norway's exemplary national ornamentation (somewhat transposed and modernised), which is so unusual, refined, and vigorous and of which Norway (along with Iceland) preserves the most precious remains in certain types of architecture, ivories, and sculpted wood.

The decoration by Johan Borgersen (from Christiania) of one the Norwegian sections with beautiful, rich Scandinavian-style tracery sculpted in red and green-stained wood was worthy of distinction. It is still cause for amazement that the dining room of the Norwegian Arts and Crafts Association, with its green-stained woodwork and red mahogany furniture, enhanced with elegant verdigris metal fittings, was not awarded a silver medal at the time.

Fine-quality enamel work also flourished in Norway. It was the same art of enamel as found in Russia, and Anderson, Olsen, and Marius Hammer handled it with equal brilliance among the silversmiths of Christiania and Bergen. Tostrup, an artist with a sensitive imagination and perfect execution was foremost among them, producing (in Christiania) translucent enamels of extreme beauty and refinement. One of his works in particular was exquisitely designed in form and colour: a blue enamel cup on a stem, it looked poised to open like the calyx of a magic flower.

Finally, the following works were also admirable: the beautiful earthenware of Lerche and the tapestries of Frida Hansen (along with the more old-fashioned tapestries of Gehrard Munthe and Holmboe).

The Russian Pavilion

Russia and Finland surprised and delighted viewers. Here, more than anywhere else, unadulterated national tradition appropriately triumphed in Art Nouveau. In short, Russia rediscovered the hidden treasures of its past and awoke to the profound soul of its peoples. One day Russia (like England), in the midst of its aesthetic revolution, was shocked to see a

The West End Review, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 30 x 218 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Latin monument – standing out from the rest and by a talented French architect, but still a copy after Rome's Saint Peters Cathedral – being raised in the centre of its capital to serve as the cathedral of its Greek Orthodox faith. Russia (like England) thus wanted a new Art that responded to its new and fervently felt patriotism. However beautiful Etienne Falconnet's statue of Peter the Great was, crowned with laurels and, under his divine emperor's toga, heroically nude in the winter snow, it was not as prized by the Russians, who were in the process of extricating themselves from western influence, as the vigorous and superb statue of Peter the Great with his boots on, majestically clenching his stick in one hand with authoritative determination: the Peter the Great by Russia's first truly great sculptor, Markus Antokolski.

In architecture, this patriotic sentiment created the highly respected neo-Russian Style, which was especially prevalent in Moscow, in the Church of Saint-Saviour and in Red Square, in the Museum of Antiquities and the new Gastiniï-Dvor. Ingenious architects with confident taste made brilliant use of enamel and mosaic coverings in the richly polychrome decoration of churches, monuments, and houses, such as the neo-Russian style Igoumnov house in Moscow.

But the national aesthetic movement was first evident in music. The new Russia had deigned listen to its popular music, all the folk songs in which Russians cried, moaned, and sighed, or were suddenly lifted up in gaiety and joie de vivre, wildly laughing and dancing along the Volga and the Black Sea, and in them the new Russia discovered the melancholy, sorrows, dreams, and exaltations of its people. Russians listened with surprise and delight to sad songs expressing the infinite sorrow of the Russian steppes, to lonely songs reflecting the bleakness of Russia's autumn and winter skies, and to tender and strange songs full of the affection and eccentricity of the individuals among its vast sea of peoples. So they came, after Glinka, the Russian musicians: Cui, Borodine, Tchaikovsky, Mussorgsky, Balakirev, Seroff, Rimsky-Korsakov, and their followers. For starters, they wanted to become Russian again (or simply to remain Russian). Although they would not deliver on all their promises and achieve all their dreams, they nevertheless created a lively and active new school of music that was already illustrious.

In the realm of painting, some Russian artists managed to free themselves from foreign influences. But in our eyes, the man who made the greatest contribution to the new decorative art was unquestionably Viktor Vasnetsov, a supreme artist. It was an astonishing display of ignorance about foreign art, when no one at the Exposition knew how to classify or judge him (not to mention the fact his work was simply under-represented). Such a master deserved more than a silver medal! To us, Vasnetsov is among the top Russian and European artists, along with Ilya Repin, Antokolski, and the amazing Troubetzkoï, who has just emerged. Although, in temperament and in their art, the latter artists are more western than Vasnetsov is; they are less faithful to older tradition than he was and, ethnically, semi-eastern. Vasnetsov alone was responsible for almost the entire decoration of Kiev's Saint-Vladimir Cathedral, one of the most glorious monuments of contemporary Russian art. In this church and elsewhere Vasnetsov infused many paintings with moving religious and national mysticism. The legendary ancient

Cover from *Soleil du Dimanche* (detail), 1897.
Magazine cover, 41 x 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

F. Guillot-Pelletier Calendar, 1897.
Colour lithograph, 37 x 53.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 70-71)

1898
F. GUILLOT-PELLE
HAMPENOIS, 66, Boul.d St MICHEL, PARIS.

1898
ETIER-ORLÉANS
AVRIL
MAI
JUIN
OCTOBRE
NOVEMBRE
DÉCEMBRE
Mucha

soul of Russia lives again in Vasnetsov. This mystic is moreover (and primarily) an exquisite master ornamentalist, a miniaturist whose work looks like it came out of the convents of old.

Several of Vasnetsov's menus (for example, the one intended for the banquet of the last coronation) are masterpieces of the purest Russian ornamental style. Finally, Vasnetsov decorated and furnished his Moscow *isba* (a northern style country cabin) in the latest fashion, which happened to be the most traditional and the simplest of styles: the rustic style. Perhaps this house, where Vasnetsov authored everything, and where everything makes for a harmonious ensemble, is the source of the delightful new decorative art we now see flourishing in Russia and which was given a strong impetus by Vasnetsov's victory at our Exposition.

The favour enjoyed north of the Kremlin by all the artists who contributed to the Exposition's Russian Village in the Trocadero Gardens is well known. But one master stood out among the others: Constantin Alexeievitch Korovine, a painter, sculptor, and architect who was responsible for the vigorous and colourful naïve-style constructions in the popular northern style. As a painter, Korovine also produced the decorative landscapes in the Russian Palace of Asia, which revealed his very individual and sincere talent. Anyone who has perused the collection of albums at Maison Mamontof, or who has admired the delightful Russian stringed instruments known as balalaikas made by Alexandre Lakovlevitch Golovine, Malioutine, Princess Ténicheff, and Korovine (again) will understand how decorative art in Russia rightly regenerated itself from the mysterious and invigorating resources of popular tradition.

Lastly, the art of enamel was also shown to brilliant advantage by Owtchinnikoff and Gratscheff.

The Finnish Pavilion

Finland was located some distance from Russia at the exhibition, as if Finland wanted to distinguish herself from Russia. The Finnish pavilion was a highly original and pure masterpiece of decoration and architecture. It also provided a good demonstration of the extent to which the newest, most modern art could draw on past tradition and how right it was for a people of national pride and passion to attach themselves to their own tradition. Everyone justifiably praised Eliel Saarinen, the exceptional and sensitive artist who created the Finnish Pavilion. The entire pavilion's ornamentation, both exterior and interior, was new and intriguing, harmonious in line and colour, solemn, impeccable. It represented an art that was entirely individual and remote, foreign, strange, and nevertheless very modern, where, translated in exquisite taste, the memories of a profound past appeared, including memories of ancient peasant houses or old-fashioned country churches with bell towers.

A beautiful illustration will be that of Kalewala by Akseli Gallen-Kallela, whose mural paintings for this pavilion revealed a mystical genius haunted by heroic and divine legends.

Cycles Perfecta (detail), 1902.
Colour lithograph, 53 x 35 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

The Romanian Pavilion

Romania, which owes its artistic heritage to the East and to the Greek Orthodox church, was taking back its memories, its dispersed fragments (as did Hungary), in order to forge a new art, at least in its architecture. The Queen of Romania (simultaneously a respected poet, artist, and queen) presided over and contributed to this positive restoration of national tradition more than anyone in her country. Not only in the architecture of churches, buildings, and houses, currently sometimes splendidly decorated with oriental polychrome, but she also contributed in the exquisite art of embroidery decorating the costumes that remain so colourful in many regions of Romania, and which is being abandoned and will perhaps soon disappear regardless of what is done with those other still-cherished remains of the past, popular song and dance.

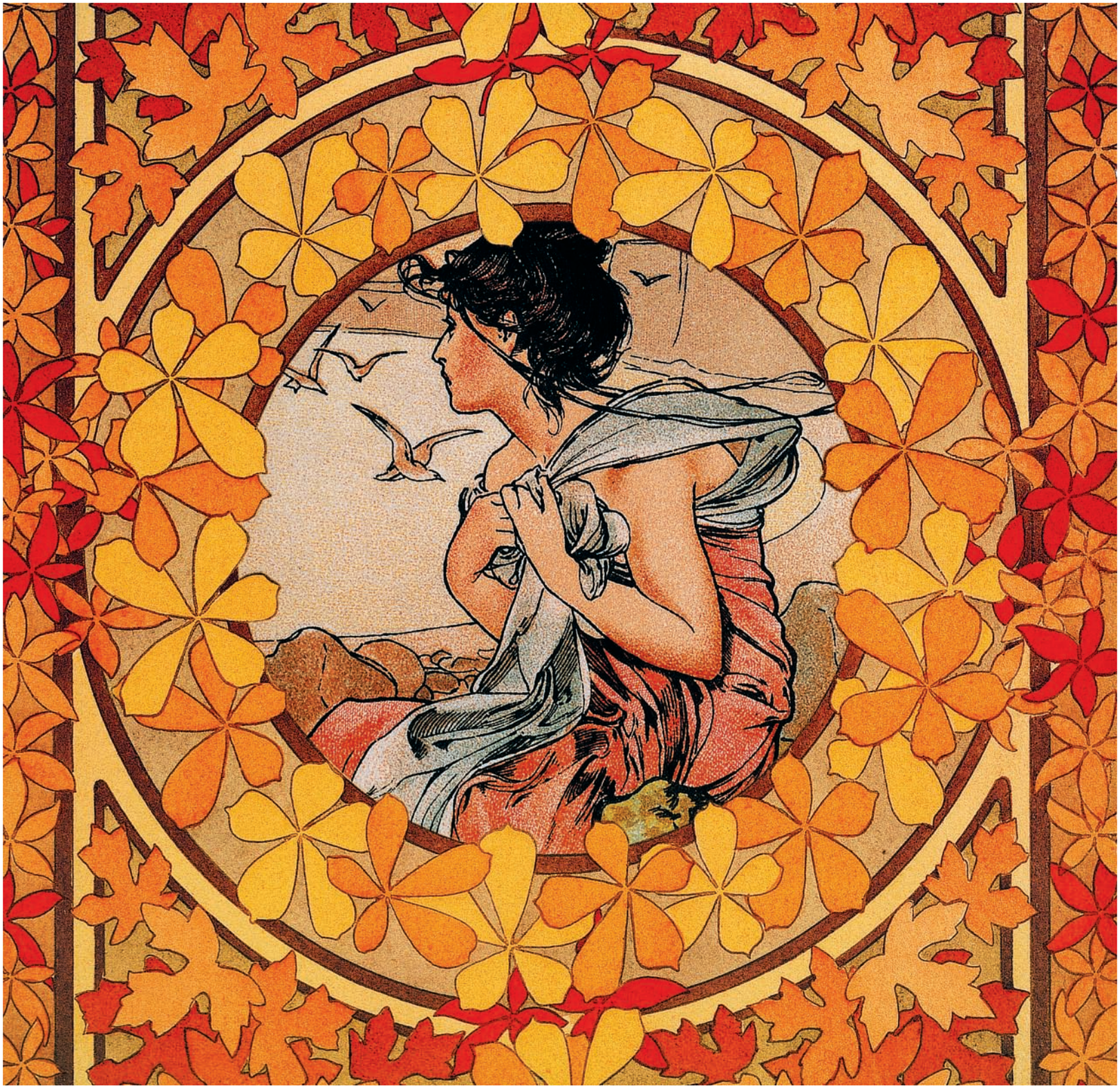
The Swiss Pavilion

Among the smaller countries, which can be rather large in their sense of history and in their current activity, Switzerland is of great interest to us because it was reclaiming its old artistic traditions in order to revitalise and modernise them. Switzerland was headed in this direction at the last Exposition in Geneva, which revealed (although less effectively and thoroughly than the amazing national museums established in Basel and Zurich) a national art that was truly Swiss and either misunderstood or unknown to us, an art of its own, despite certainly more than one foreign influence (primarily Germany's). Nothing was more original, charming, and gay than the decoration of its pavilions for Food and its pavilion for the Swiss Watch-Making Industry, by Bouvier. Finally, the following Swiss achievements should be noted: the cloisonné enamels on wood or plaster, so charming in decoration by Heaton of Neufchatel; the silks of Saint-Gall and Adlissweill (which warranted greater vigilance from the French silk trade in Lyon out of jealous respect for these worrisome Swiss rivals); the greater attention given to the needed revival of all art forms; and the work of Geneva's School of Industrial Arts.

The Universal Exposition of 1900 presented a much grander view of Art Nouveau's development than the image of Art Nouveau retained by subsequent decades. The event is therefore a true testament to the trend, defining the new movement as nearly universal and moreover highly national in character. The aesthetic renewal that came out of the Decorative Arts and that rapidly spread to other areas (such as architecture and music), advocating Unity of Work (one Art in everything and for everything) really was present in nearly every western country, but each country chose to apply its own taste to the trend and in this way the movement was a multi-faceted cultural phenomenon among different populations. England's Modern Style (born out of the Arts and Crafts movement), France's Art Nouveau, Germany's Jugendstil, and even the Austrian Secession movement are all good examples. If the ideals of modernity and aesthetics remained the same, the works themselves always responded to purely national taste and expertise.

Adaptation from *The Months*
Postcard: *September* and *Documents Decoratifs*, 1899 and 1902.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm and 46 x 33 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Sarah Bernhardt, Lefèvre-Utile, 1903.
Oil on canvas, 72 x 53 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 76)



MUCHA

Mucha and Art Nouveau

Mucha and Art Nouveau

Since the Art Nouveau revival of the 1960s, when students around the world adorned their rooms with reproductions of Mucha posters of girls with tendril-like hair and the designers of record sleeves produced Mucha imitations in hallucinogenic colours, Alphonse Mucha's name has been irrevocably associated with the Art Nouveau style and with the Parisian fin-de-siècle.

Artists rarely like to be categorised and Mucha would have resented the fact that he is almost exclusively remembered for a phase of his art that lasted barely ten years and that he was regarded as of lesser importance. As a passionate Czech patriot he would have also been unhappy to be regarded as a "Parisian" artist.

Mucha was born on 24 July, 1860 at Ivancice in Moravia, then a province of the vast Habsburg Empire. It was an empire that was already splitting apart at the seams under the pressures of the burgeoning nationalism of its multi-ethnic component parts. In the year before Mucha's birth, nationalist aspirations throughout the Habsburg Empire were encouraged by the defeat of the Austrian army in Lombardy that preceded the unification of Italy.

In the first decade of Mucha's life, Czech nationalism found expression in the orchestral tone poems of Bedrich Smetana that he collectively entitled "Ma Vlast" (My country) and in his great epic opera "Dalibor" (1868). It was symptomatic of the Czech nationalist struggle against the German cultural domination of Central Europe, in that the text of "Dalibor" had to be written in German and translated into Czech.

From his earliest days Mucha would have imbibed the heady and fervent atmosphere of Slav nationalism that pervades "Dalibor" and Smetana's subsequent pageant of Czech history, "Libuse", which was used to open the Czech National Theatre in 1881, and for which Mucha himself would later provide set and costume designs.

Mucha was born into relatively humble circumstances, as the son of a court usher. His own son, Jiri Mucha, would later proudly trace the presence of the Mucha family in the town of Ivancice back to the 15th century. If his family was poor, Mucha's upbringing was nevertheless abundant with artistic stimulation and encouragement.

According to his son Jiri, "He drew even before he learnt to walk and his mother would tie a pencil round his neck with a coloured ribbon so that he could draw as he crawled on the floor.

Lance Parfum Rodo (detail), 1896.
Colour lithograph, 44.5 x 32 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*, plate 56, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p.80)

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*, plate 57, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 81)

Dusk, 1899.
Colour Lithograph, 68 x 103 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 82-83)

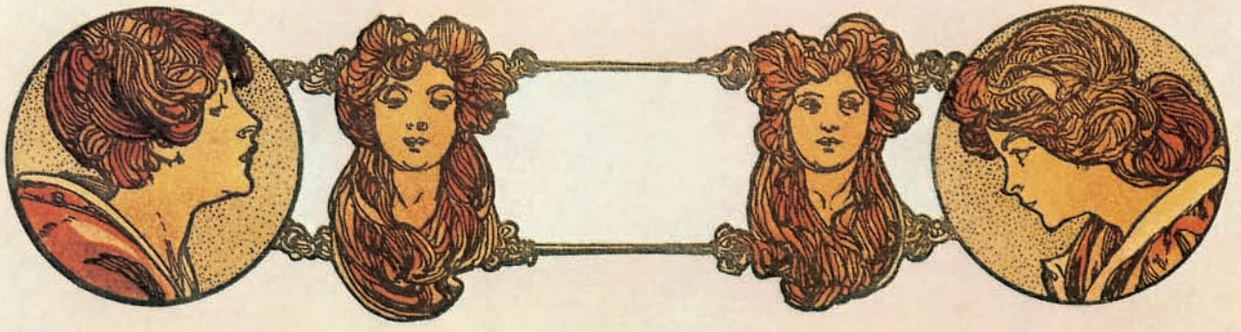
Study for *The Moon*, 1902.
Pen and wash drawing and watercolour, 56 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 84)

Study for *The Evening Star*, 1902.
Pen and wash drawing and watercolour, 56 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 84)

Study for *The North Star*, 1902.
Pen and wash drawing and watercolour, 56 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 85)

Study for *The Morning Star*, 1902.
Pen and wash drawing and watercolour, 56 x 21 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 85)

AU PARADIS DES BEBES
ETRENNES !

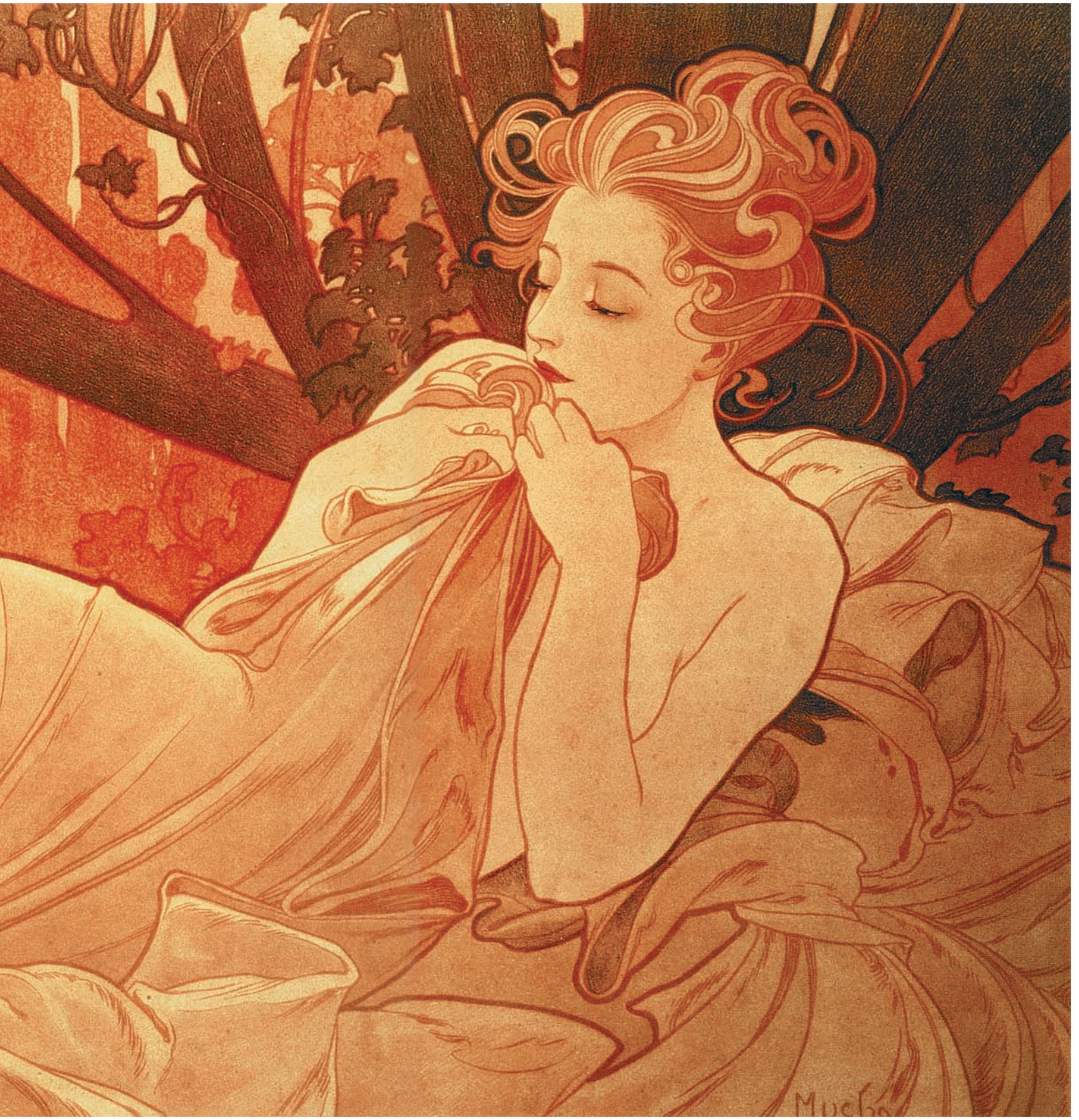


AL' ARBRE DE NOEL
Mucha

ART ET DECORATION

REVUE MENSUELLE D ART MODERNE

LIBRAIRIE CENTRALE DES BEAUX-ARTS
13 RUE LAFAYETTE PARIS.


Mucha

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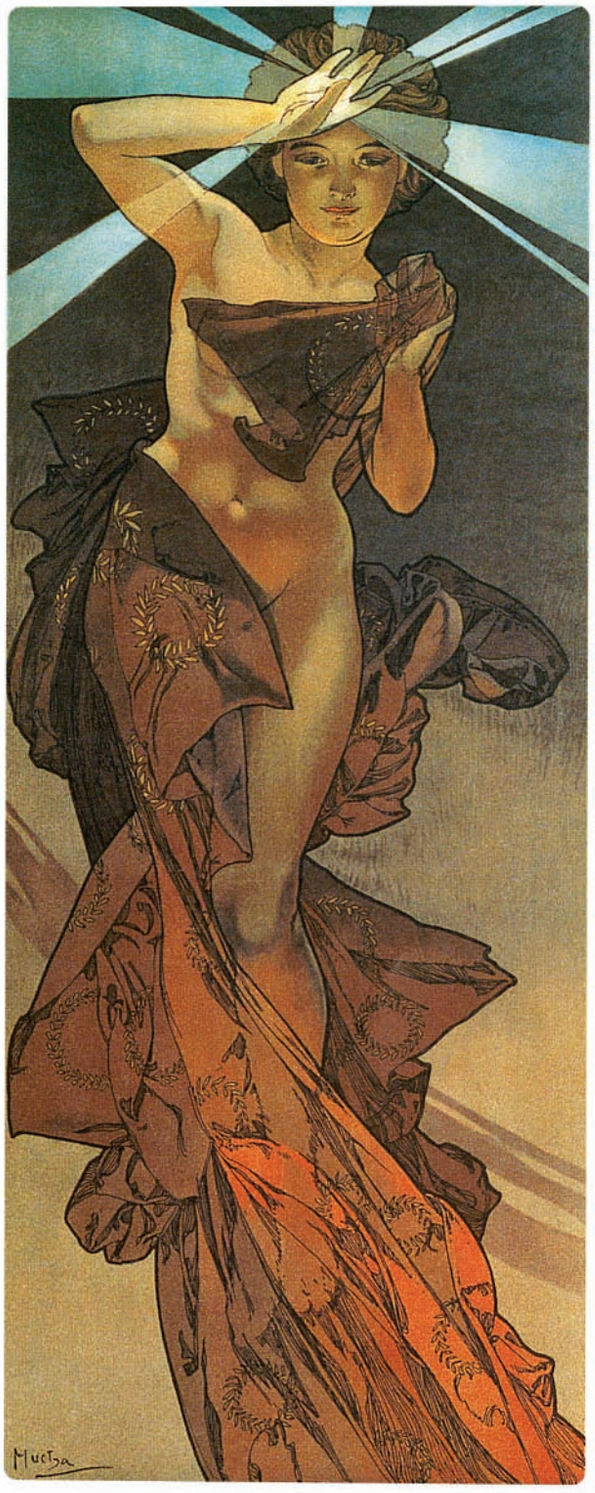
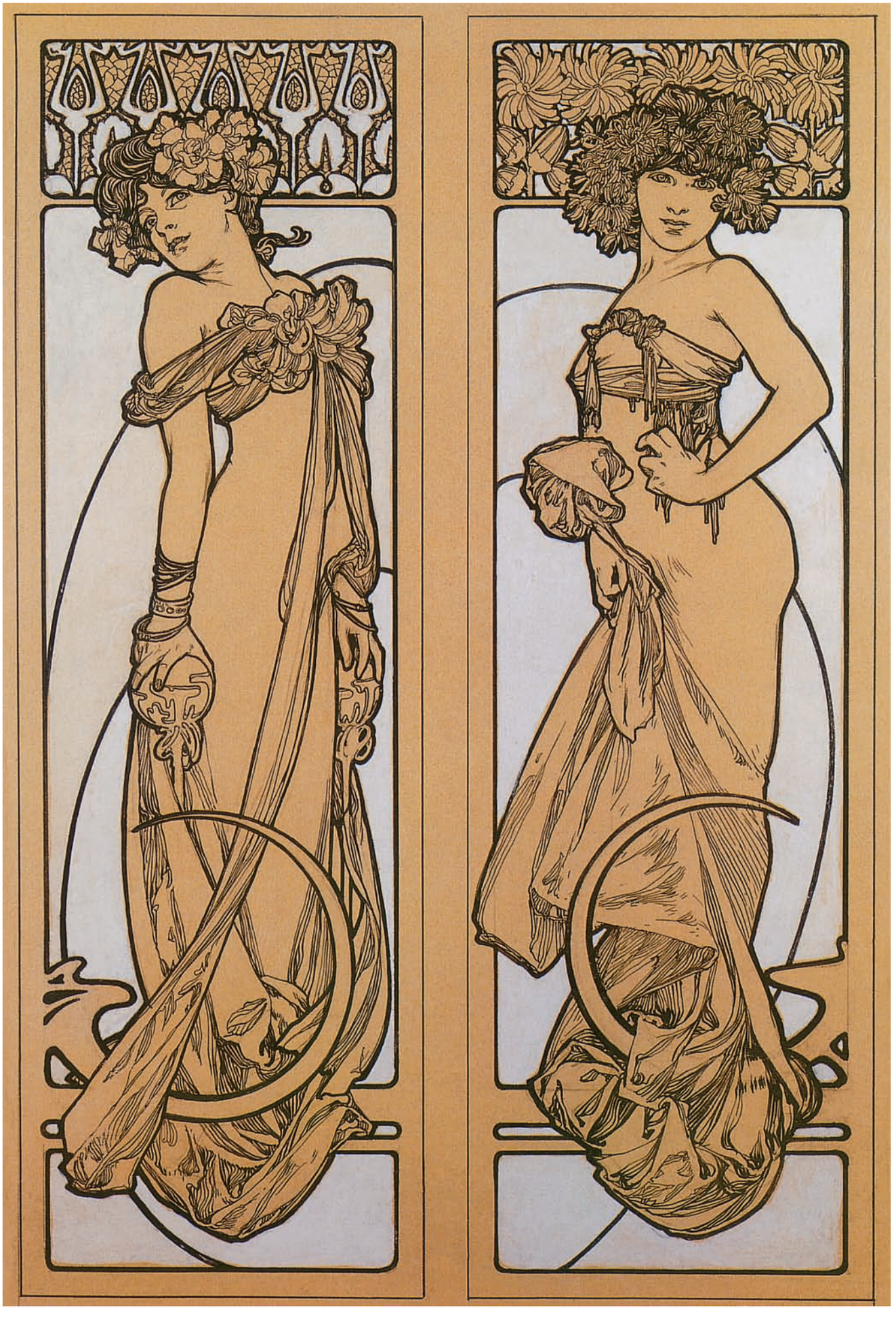

Mucha



Each time he lost the pencil, he would start howling." His first important aesthetic experience would have been in the Baroque church of St Peter in the local capital of Brno where, from the age of ten, he sang as a choir-boy in order to support his studies in the grammar school. During his four years as a chorister he came into frequent contact with Leoš Janácek, who would later come to be known as the greatest Czech composer of his generation with whom Mucha shared a passion to create a characteristically Czech art.

The luxurious theatricality of Central European Baroque with its lush curvilinear and nature-inspired decoration undoubtedly coloured his imagination and inspired a taste for "smells and bells" and religious paraphernalia that remained with him throughout his life. At the height of his fame, his studio was described as being like a "secular chapel… screens placed here and there, that could well be confessionals; and then incense burning all the time. It's more like the chapel of an oriental monk than a studio." While earning a living as a clerk, Mucha continued to indulge his love of drawing and in 1877, he gathered together his self-taught body of work and attempted unsuccessfully to enter the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague.

After two more years of drudgery as a civil servant, he lost his job, according to Jiri Mucha, because he drew the portraits of a picturesque family of gypsies instead of taking down their particulars. In 1879, he spotted an advertisement in a Viennese newspaper for the firm of Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt, makers of theatrical scenery who were looking for designers and craftsmen.

Mucha sent off examples of his work and this time he was successful and received an offer for a job. As a country boy who had been no further than the picturesque (but still provincial) Prague, Vienna in 1879 must have looked awesomely grand.

It had recently undergone what was, after Haussmann's Paris, the most impressive scheme of urban renewal of the 19th century. Each of the great public buildings lining the Ringstrasse, which replaced the old ramparts that had encircled the medieval town centre, was built in a historical style, deemed appropriate to its purpose.

The result was a grandiose architectural fancy-dress ball. The Art Nouveau style, of which Mucha would later become one of the most famous representatives, reacted directly against this kind of pompous wedding cake historicism. For the moment though, Mucha was deeply influenced by the showy and decorative art of Hans Mackart, the most successful Viennese painter of the Ringstrasse period.

After barely two years, Mucha's Viennese sojourn came to an abrupt end. On 10 December 1881, the Ringtheater burnt down. In a century punctuated by terrible theatre fires, this was one of the worst, claiming the lives of over five hundred members of the audience. The Ringtheater was also one of the principal clients of the firm of Kautsky-Brioschi-Burghardt and in the aftermath of the disaster, Mucha lost his job.

Two Standing Women, Design for *Documents décoratifs*, board 45, 1902.
Pencil, feather and indian ink on paper, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Mucha moved to the small town of Mikulov and fell back upon the time-honoured artistic tradition of making ends meet: making portraits of local dignitaries. His unusual way of attracting a clientele is related in his memoirs. He booked a room at the "Lion Hotel" and managed to sell a drawing of some local ruins to a dealer called Thiery who displayed it in his shop window and quickly sold it on:

So I got busy drawing again, not ruins this time, but the people around me. I painted the head of a pretty woman and brought it to Thiery. He put it into the window and I began to look forward to the cash. When there was no news from Thiery for two and even three days, I went to ask him myself. The good man wasn't pleased to see me. Mikulov society was filled with indignation, and my picture had to be taken out of the window.

The young lady I had painted was the wife of the local doctor, and Thiery had put a notice next to the portrait saying, 'For five florins at the Lion Hotel'. The scandal was duly explained and in the end worked out to my advantage. The whole town knew that a painter had come to live at the Lion. In the course of time, I painted the whole neighbourhood – all the uncles and aunts of Mikulov.

It was while he was living in Mikulov that Mucha encountered the first of the two patrons who were to transform his career. One was a wealthy local landowner called Count Khuen, who invited Mucha to decorate the dining room in the newly-built castle of Emmahof with frescoes. This was Mucha's first encounter with murals and initiated a life-long ambition of painting large-scale decorative work.

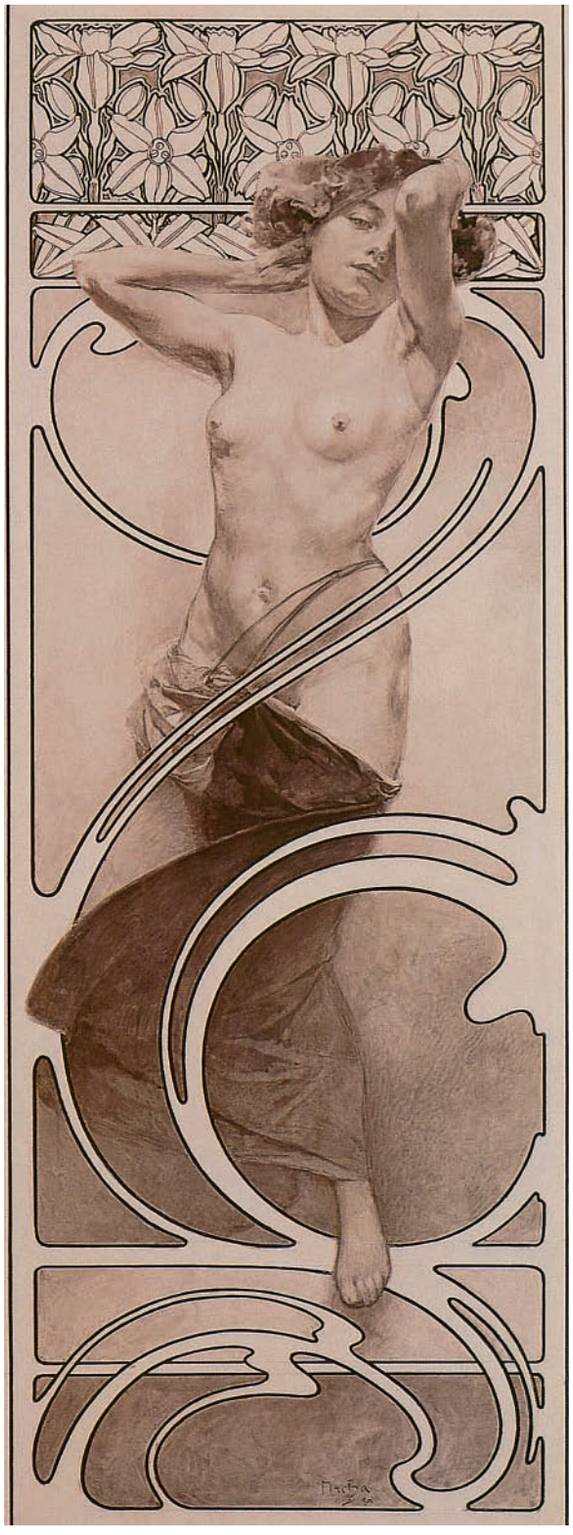
Even the posters of the 1890s, on which Mucha's fame now largely rests, can be seen as reflecting this desire to decorate walls. Such a desire was common to many artists of the fin-de-siècle. The large scale decorative paintings of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, the most widely-admired and influential artist of the period, were commonly referred to as "fresques" though they were in fact oil paintings on canvas that simulated the effect of frescoes.

The manifesto of the Symbolist "Salon de la Rose-Croix" set up in 1892 by "Sar" Joséphin Péladan, stated "The Order prefers work which has a mural-like character as being of superior essence." The paintings of Edvard Munch's "Frieze of Life" and the flat, stylised canvases of Gauguin could be regarded as "fresques manquées".

Albert Aurier, the very first critic who attempted to introduce Gauguin's work to the French public wrote "You have among you a decorator of genius. Walls! Walls! Give him walls!". We can only judge Mucha's murals for Count Khuen from dim black and white photographs as the originals were destroyed in the final days of the Second World War, but they were no doubt fairly conventional and academic as all his work would be for the next few years.

Nude in a Decorative Frame. Drawing for *Documents décoratifs*, Board 10, 1902.
Pencil, Indian ink and white highlights on paper, 61 x 23 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Woman Holding Mistletoe. Drawing for *Documents décoratifs*, Board 11, 1902.
Ink drawing and white highlights on paper, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.



RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
MINISTÈRE DU COMMERCE DE L'INDUSTRIE DES POSTES ET TÉLÉGRAPHES
EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE & INTERNATIONALE
DE St LOUIS (ÉTATS-UNIS)
DU 30 AVRIL AU 30 NOVEMBRE 1904.
DE PARIS A St LOUIS
6 JOURS DE STEAMER
ET 1 JOUR DE CHEMIN DE FER
Pour renseignements et adhésions concernant la FRANCE s'adresser au Ministère du Commerce, Commissariat Général du Gouvernement Français, 101, Rue de Grenelle, PARIS, et au Comité de la Section Française à la Bourse du Commerce de PARIS.
IMPORTANCE DE L'EXPOSITION
PHILADELPHIE 1876 _ 95 HECTARES
PARIS _____ 1900 _ 135 HECTARES
CHICAGO _____ 1893 _ 240 HECTARES
St LOUIS _____ 1904 _ 500 HECTARES
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS - PARIS

When the first set of murals was finished at Emmahof, Count Khuen passed Mucha on to his brother Count Egon, who lived in the ancestral castle of Gandegg in the Tyrol, who in turn sent Mucha off for a period of study in Munich.

After Bavaria was raised to the dignity of a kingdom early in the 19th century, King Ludwig determined that his capital should become the cultural capital of central and German-speaking Europe. The public buildings he commissioned in Neoclassical and Neo-Renaissance style made his desire clear to the world that Munich be seen as the Athens or the Florence of the North.

By the end of the century, Munich was regarded by many as a serious alternative to Paris. Amongst the aspiring artists who were attracted to Munich were Lovis Corinth, Wassily Kandinsky, Alexei von Jawlensky, Paul Klee, and Giorgio de Chirico. Even the young Picasso briefly considered going to Munich in preference to Paris.

The mid 1880s was perhaps not the most propitious time to arrive. The Munich Secession which opened up a more liberal and cosmopolitan phase in the local art scene, was seven years in the future. Munich was still dominated by such conservative figures as the portraitist Franz von Lenbach and the history painter Karl Theodor von Piloty, though Piloty's vast and bombastic canvas of Thusnelda in the Triumphal Procession of Germanicus (which had been acquired by the Neue Pinakothek in 1874) may have encouraged Mucha's budding ambition to paint big patriotic pictures.

After the completion of a second set of murals at Emmahof, Count Khuen generously offered Mucha the choice of further study in either Rome or Paris.

Wisely and fatefully his choice fell upon Paris. The timing could hardly have been better. 1888 was a momentous year in the early history of modern art. Fully recovered from the traumas of the Franco-Prussian War and the bloody massacres of the Commune, Paris was in full glory and the undisputed culture and pleasure capital of the Western world.

Preparations were in hand for the forthcoming Exposition Universelle of 1889 and Eiffel's tower was rising on the city horizon. Gauguin in Brittany and Van Gogh in Arles were each on the brink of significant breakthroughs in their art. Together with their fellow Post Impressionists they were laying the foundations for much of what would happen in Western art over the following half century.

Mucha entered the Académie Julian where he met Sérusier, Vuillard, Bonnard, Denis, and other future members of the Nabis group. At the end of the summer, Sérusier returned in triumph with the Talisman, a tiny painting on a cigar box lid that he had made in Brittany under Gauguin's instruction.

Exposition Universelle Internationale de St Louis (États-Unis), 1903.
Colour lithograph, 101 x 72.3 cm.
Collection of Jean-Louis Lamot, Brussels.

Ostensibly a landscape, it was perhaps the most radically abstracted painting of the 19th century. Though Mucha was later on friendly terms with Gauguin and even shared his studio with him for a while in 1893 (when he took a hilarious photograph of the trouser-less Gauguin playing his harmonium), there is no indication that he was ever very interested in the more radical innovations of the Post Impressionists or even of the older Impressionists. In this, he was perhaps fairly typical of the multitude of students who had flocked to Paris and to the Académie Julian in particular, from all over the world. His fellow student Maurice Denis wrote "Even the boldest students knew next to nothing about Impressionism. They admired Bastien-Lepage, spoke with respect of Puvis de Chavannes (although secretly doubting whether he could draw), discussed Péladan and Wagner, read superficial decadent literature and got excited about mysticism, the Kabbalah, and the Chaldean calendar."

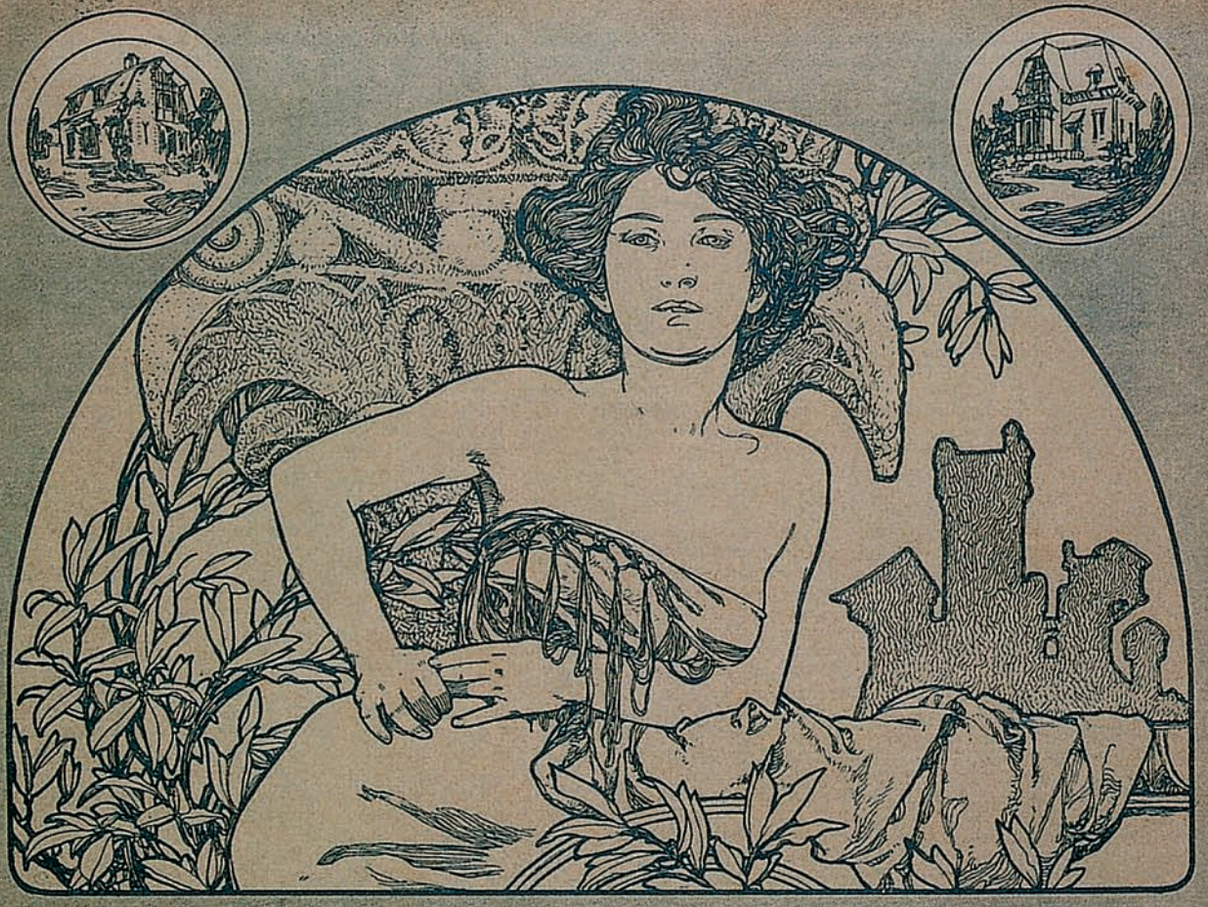
Though Mucha's technique and style remained essentially academic well into the 1890s, he was profoundly influenced by the Symbolist movement and the kind of mysticism that held sway in literary and artistic circles in Paris in the second half of the 1880s. The Symbolists were reacting against the materialist and positivist philosophies that had dominated the mid-19th century and that had found expression in the Realist movement and in Impressionism, with its devotion to the objective recording of sensory perception. The year 1884 had brought a sea of change in the cultural atmosphere of Paris and the belated recognition of the three older French Symbolist painters, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Gustave Moreau, and Odilon Redon.

After years of being dismissed as clumsy and anachronistic, Puvis triumphed at the Salon with his mysterious and hieratic "Bois Sacré", a painting that spawned a thousand imitations. Gustave Moreau and Odilon Redon were introduced to a wider public through the somewhat sensational and lurid descriptions of their works in Joris-Karl Huysmans' novel *Against Nature*.

This scandalous novel became a cult book and was regarded as a manifesto of decadent fin-de-siècle taste. The Swedish playwright August Strindberg noted the abruptness of the change. On a visit to Paris in 1883 he noted that Bastien-Lepage and Manet were the artists most admired in advanced circles, but two years later "in the midst of the last spasms of naturalism, one name was pronounced by all with admiration: that of Puvis de Chavannes". The stylised flatness of Puvis' murals with their heavily contoured forms and the precious decorative quality of Moreau's paintings (what Moreau called "la richesse nécessaire") were important components of Mucha's mature style and he undoubtedly absorbed many of the attitudes and ideas of the Symbolist movement. As his son Jiri put it, "I could see in my father to what extent this mixture of theosophy, occultism, and mysticism captivated its adherents, and yet Father never declared himself to be a Symbolist and would probably have been very surprised by such a classification."

Cover of *L'Habitation pratique* (April 1910), 1903.
Lithograph, 34.3 x 31.8 cm.
Collection of Victor Arwas, London.

REVUE MENSUELLE



L'HABITATION PRATIQUE

LIBRAIRIE DE LA "CONSTRUCTION MODERNE"
13, Rue Bonaparte, 13 — PARIS (VIe)

ABONNEMENT :
UN AN . . . . . 20 FRANCS
Payables en deux échéances, le 1er janvier et le 1er juillet de chaque année.

PRIX DU NUMÉRO :
PARIS ET DÉPARTEMENTS. . . . . 2 FR. 50
Pour les départements : Abonnement, 21 francs Étranger, 22 francs

AVRIL 1910

At the end of 1889, Count Khuen, suddenly and without warning terminated his financial support of Mucha. Mucha had to abandon his studies at the Academie Colarossi (to which he had transferred in 1889) and endured a period of penury before he began to earn a modest living as an illustrator in the early 1890s.

What finally liberated Mucha from the strait-jacket of his academic style and unleashed his native talent and inventiveness was the arrival of the Art Nouveau style in the mid-1890s. After germinating for a decade or more in Britain, Art Nouveau finally appeared in its fully developed form in Brussels in 1892 in the designs of Victor Horta for the Maison Tassel.

Here we see the exuberant whiplash line and the bold use of metal and glass in organically unified designs inspired by natural forms.

Like some kind of bacillus, Art Nouveau spread from place to place, often through the pages of art magazines, newly enriched with photographic illustrations and colour lithography.

It mutated as it went, taking on local colour and transforming itself into something almost totally different by the time it reached such far-flung places as Glasgow, Barcelona, and Vienna and eventually making appearances in such exotic and unlikely places as Moscow, Tunis, and Chicago.

The various names coined for the style as it made its triumphal progress, Art Nouveau, Liberty Style, Jugendstil, Secession Style, Arte Joven etc, all seem to emphasise its newness and its break with the past – most specifically with the musty historicism of the mid-19th century.

In fact Art Nouveau itself drew upon a myriad of earlier and exotic styles – Japanese, Celtic, Islamic, Gothic, Baroque, and Rococo amongst many others. As a decorative style it was greeted with unprecedented enthusiasm but also a fair amount of scepticism and hostility.

It was frequently seen as something alien, imported from elsewhere. In Germany, it was denounced as the "Belgian tape-worm style". The traditional enemies, France and Britain, tended to blame each other, with the British taking up the French term "Art Nouveau" and the French often using the "franglais" of "le Modern Style".

In Paris it was noted that the two most important promoters of the style in the city, Siegfried Bing at the shop "L'Art Nouveau" and Julius Meier-Graefe at "La Maison Moderne" were both German Jews. The critic Arsène Alexandre commented sourly, "All this reeks of the depraved Englishman, the drug-addicted Jewess, or the cunning Belgian, or a charming mixture of these three poisons."

Portrait of Maruška, 1903.
Gouache on cartboard,
50.7 x 32.1 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Friendship, 1904.
Full-colour reproduction in The New York Daily News, 48 x 33.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 96)

Lefèvre-Utile Gaufrette Vanille Packaging (detail), 1900.
Mixed media.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 97)

COLORED SECTION

The New York Daily News

TEN ART PAGES

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 1904.

FRIENDSHIP

DRAWN FOR THE New York Daily News BY ALPHONSE MUCHA

COPYRIGHTED 1904 BY FRANK A. MUNSEY

LEFÈVRE-UTILE
GAUFRETTES VANILLE
Mucha

("Tout cela sent l'Anglais vicieux, la Juive morphinomane, ou le Belge roublard, ou une agréable salade de ces trois poisons.")

It is unlikely to have passed Alexandre by that the two most characteristic Parisian examples of the style were the metro entrances of Hector Guimard and the posters of the Czech Mucha.

The style burst upon Paris in 1895 with Guimard's design for the apartment block known as the Castel Beranger, the opening of Siegfried Bing's emporium and in the very first days of the year with the appearance on the streets of Paris of Mucha's poster for Sarah Bernhardt in the role of Gismonda.

The huge success of this poster turned Mucha overnight into one of the stars of the Parisian artistic firmament. Mucha was already thirty-four years old with a considerable body of work behind him, and the suddenness and completeness of his transformation seem remarkable.

According to Jiri Mucha, "From his first day in Paris until Christmas 1894, there was no change in his work other than a growing skill and an increased tendency towards Symbolism. His style was born suddenly, overnight, ready-made without any previous development." A similarly sudden and complete transformation can be seen in the work of the artist Gustav Klimt who, three years later and at the age of thirty-five, responded to the arrival of Art Nouveau in Vienna.

In Mucha's case (though the stylistic change was the result not only of his discovery of Art Nouveau, but also of his response to the very special demands of the relatively new art form of the poster), it was the discovery of the printing technique of lithography in 1798 by the Bavarian Alois Senefelder that enabled the 19th-century development of the poster as an art form. Senefelder claimed that this momentous discovery was made by accident when he used a greasy pencil to jot down a laundry list for his mother on a slab of stone.

He realised that when greasy ink was washed across the stone, it would stick to the crayon marks and not to the rest of the stone. It was a technique with infinite possibilities, for reproducing the effects of drawing or even painting and had the great advantage that virtually limitless numbers of copies could be produced extremely cheaply.

The development of the poster went hand in hand in the last decades of the 19th century with the increasingly sophisticated use of colour techniques and the influence of Japanese woodblock prints. These prints flooded the West in ever increasing quantities from 1853 when the United States Navy forced Japan to open up to international trade.

Madonna of the Lilies, 1905.
Distemper on canvas, 247 x 182 cm.
National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

I. Blessed Are the Meek: For They Shall Inherit the Earth, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache, 43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

II. Blessed Are the Pure of Heart: For They Shall See God, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache, 43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

III. Blessed Are They That Mourn: For They Shall Be Comforted, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache, 43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

IV. Blessed Are the Merciful: For They Shall Obtain Mercy, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache, 43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

Though the technique of woodblock printing is quite different in principle from lithography, it is similar in that a separate block or plate is needed for each colour. The ingenuity of the Japanese artists in using a limited number of colours to create rich and varied effects demonstrated to Western artists how the limitations of colour lithography could be turned to their advantage.

The Japanese also showed how text and image could be integrated into a satisfyingly unified whole.

The first great master of the Parisian poster was Jules Cheret. Dubbed the "Watteau of the streets", he developed a highly distinctive style that looked back to 18th-century painters such as Watteau, Tiepolo, and Fragonard.

At the same time, his use of flat abstracted forms and bright colours and his depiction of pleasure-loving Belle Époque Parisiennes seemed thoroughly modern. An important milestone in the history of the poster was the appearance of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec's startling poster for the cabaret singer Aristide Bruant in 1892.

With its large areas of bright, solid colour, the Bruant poster caught every eye from across the widest squares and boulevards and became the talk of Paris. The periodical "La Vie Parisienne" demanded rhetorically, "Who will rid us of this picture of Aristide Bruant? You cannot move a step without being confronted with it. Bruant is supposed to be an artist; why, then, does he put himself up on the walls besides the gas lamps and other advertisements? Doesn't he object to neighbours like these?"

If Lautrec's bold poster of Bruant outraged as many as it delighted, Mucha's exquisitely refined and fin-de-siècle poster of Sarah Bernhardt as Gismonda finally convinced the Parisian public that posters could be great art.

Mucha's encounter with the great actress Sarah Bernhardt was another happy co-incidence that was to transform his life and his career. In the mid-1890s, Bernhardt was at the very pinnacle of a glorious career that dated back to the 1860s.

Thanks to railways, steamships, mass circulation newspapers, and later to moving film and gramophone records, and above all to her skilful manipulation of these new possibilities, Bernhardt enjoyed world fame beyond that of any earlier performing artist. Like the singer Madonna in our own day, she was intensely aware of the importance of her image and of the need to keep it fresh and changing.

Her relationship with Mucha in the 1890s was a symbiotic one of enormous benefit to both. Countless portraits of Sarah Bernhardt were made over her long career, beginning with the touching series of daguerreotypes of the youthful Sarah, made by the famous photographer Nadar in the 1860s.

V. Blessed Are They That Are Persecuted for Righteousness Sake: For Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache,
43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

VI. Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit: For Theirs Is the Kingdom of Heaven, 1906.
Watercolour and gouache,
43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Moravian Gallery, Brno.

Bernhardt's friend and admirer William Graham Robertson was convinced that no portrait could capture her. "This strange dream-beauty was impossible to transfer to canvas; no portrait of her holds even the shadow of it." He dismisses Bastien-Lepage's portrait as "little more than a caricature" and goes on to damn most of the others. "Georges Clairin's immense canvas, full of frills, flounces, fringes, dogs, and cushions, like an odd lot at a jumble sale, is of no value as a likeness; Gandara's portrait is a clever study of a pink dress, but Sarah is not inside it. She looked so paintable, yet no one could paint her." Oddly, Robertson fails even to mention Mucha's posters.

They were not accurate likenesses and were not intended as such (Bernhardt was, after all fifty years old when the first of them was made). Nevertheless they have done more to preserve the poetry and beauty of her aura for posterity than any other image.

Bernhardt took an intense interest in art. She herself was a gifted amateur sculptress described by George Bernard Shaw as "very clever with her fingers". Though she was uninterested in the more advanced tendencies in the French art of her time, she greatly admired the English Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones and went to visit him in his studio when she was in London.

Unfortunately her desire to have him make her portrait came to nothing. Burne-Jones' delightfully-expressed mock terror at meeting the Divine Sarah in letters to William Graham Robertson convey something of the awed admiration with which she was regarded.

"Will you give the enclosed to the Supreme and Infinitely Glorious One, kneeling as you give it.

She is not to dream of troubling to answer. Who am I, great powers, that she should take a moment's trouble!"

"Yes, Wednesday will do lovely and I'll be with you at 7, and She has but to fix her own time about Briar Rose and it shall be my time and everybody else's time."

"Tell me how long She stays and how long is to be seen and worshipped in this new play – for go I must, though I shall be ill for a week after it."

"Even if I were free tomorrow I don't think I could meet Her at lunch. – I cannot speak French even to a waiter and what could I say to her?"

"No, come with Her and gently interpret what She says to me – and I will gape open-mouthed and be quite happy. And at the last moment let Her change Her mind and alter the day or hour. On no account is She to be bored or tired but to have everything Her own lovely way and at a minute's notice."

A Christmas Inspiration, Burr McIntosh Monthly, 1907. Colour lithograph, 31 x 18.5 cm. The Mucha Trust Collection.

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No. 57
CHRISTMAS NUMBER, 1907
Price, 50 Cents
Yearly Subscription, $3.00
The
BURR McINTOSH
MONTHLY.
Mucha
1907
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BURR PUBLISHING CO.
New York City

Mucha
ANGELICA BITTER TONIC
JOSEPH TRINER
JOS. TRINER'S
ANGELICA
BITTER TONIC
616-622 SO. ASHLAND AVE. CHICAGO

The story of how Mucha came to make his great breakthrough with his poster of Gismonda as related by the artist himself, has the flavour of an old-fashioned Hollywood biopic.

On the morning of Christmas Day 1894, Mucha turned up at Lemercier's printing shop in the Rue de Seine on an errand to help an artist friend who had gone away over the holiday period. While he was there Sarah Bernhardt phoned to say that she needed a poster for her new play Gismonda, one of a series written to showcase her histrionic talents by the popular playwright Victorien Sardou (two of which, "*Tosca*" and "*Fedora*", have survived in operatic settings by Puccini and Giordano). The poster was needed by New Year's Eve. With little hope of finding another artist at such short notice over the Christmas period, the manager, a certain M. de Brunhoff, turned in desperation to Mucha and persuaded him to attend a performance that very night. The impoverished Mucha had no suitable clothes for such a glamorous occasion. "What was I to do? I had no tails. I managed to hire a suitable tail-coat for ten francs, but as none of the trousers fit, I decided to wear the ordinary black trousers I wore all the time. At night all cows are black, I told myself. But that was not all. I'd have to have a top hat."

He managed to borrow:

A very old one that must have dated back to the forties; it was like a battleship and on the big side for me. The springs were all twisted and it wobbled when I put it on, so that I had to steady it with a finger to keep it from falling over my eyes.

In this attire I turned up in the wings at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, with a sketchbook and all the pencils I needed. Sarah was sublime, especially in the bit where she goes to church on Easter Sunday to the sound of bells and Gregorian chant. I sketched her dress, the golden flowers in her hair, the wide sleeves, and a palm leaf in her hand.

All the time the top hat kept swaying on my head and, as soon as I started drawing, it fell over my eyes. This made things very difficult because I couldn't see the paper. But I was afraid to take the hat off as it was only lent and somebody might steal it. A few steps away stood two very elegant gentlemen, highly amused at my predicament.

I must have aroused their sympathy because one of them came to me and said, "Put your hat on the chair here; I'll guard it for you."

It was Sardou. After the theatre in a scene that seems pure Hollywood, Mucha went to a café with de Brunoff and sketched his idea for the poster on a marble table top that the café proprietor kept and later sold.

Jos. Triner's Angelica Bitter Tonic, 1907. Colour lithograph, 37.5 x 32.4 cm. Collection of Robert Allan Haas, Kansas City.

Woman with a Daisy (detail), 1900. Printed uholstery fabric, 60 x 78.5 cm. The Mucha Trust Collection. (pp. 108-109)

The elongated format of the poster (influenced by a type of Japanese print that in turn derives from Chinese scroll painting) necessitated the use of two lithographic stones. The work was pushed through so rapidly that Mucha had no time for the finishing touches to the lower half and the two halves failed to match up perfectly.

The end result was utterly different from the brasher posters produced by Cheret and Lautrec. So bizarre did it seem with its unusual format, hieratic composition, stylised detail, and its delicate and muted colours that the printer and the manager were disconcerted and fully expected a disaster.

Luckily there was no time to commission another poster and, above all, the great Sarah herself was enchanted. When Mucha went to see her in her dressing room, he reported "My poster was up on the wall, Sarah was standing in front of it, unable to tear her eyes away. When she saw me, she came and embraced me. In short, no disgrace, but success, great success."

Bernhardt's judgement was vindicated. When the poster appeared on the walls of Paris in January 1895, it created a sensation. As Jerome Doucet wrote in the Revue Illustrée, "This poster made all Paris familiar with Mucha's name from one day to the next… This poster, this white window, this mosaic on the wall, is a creation of the first order, which has well deserved its triumph."

The poster was used in London as well and clearly made a profound impression on the sculptor Alfred Gilbert, then at work on his grandiose and very fin-de-siècle masterpiece, the tomb of the Duke of Clarence at Windsor Castle. The exquisite polychrome bronze statuettes that adorn the tomb show more than a passing resemblance to Gismonda.

The firm of Lemercier printed 4,000 copies of the poster for Sarah Bernhardt but tried to hang on to some of this number for themselves. Bernhardt was forced to take legal action to regain possession of the final 550 copies. The court records indicate that Mucha may have taken a little poetic licence in his account of the rapid creation of his first masterpiece and that the poster was probably not printed until the first days of the New Year rather than on New Year's Eve as he claimed. Extraordinary though Mucha's story was, even more fantastic versions circulated of his discovery by Sarah Bernhardt. One version that must have galled this patriotic Czech, had him as a Gypsy violinist encountered by Bernhardt on a tour of Hungary.

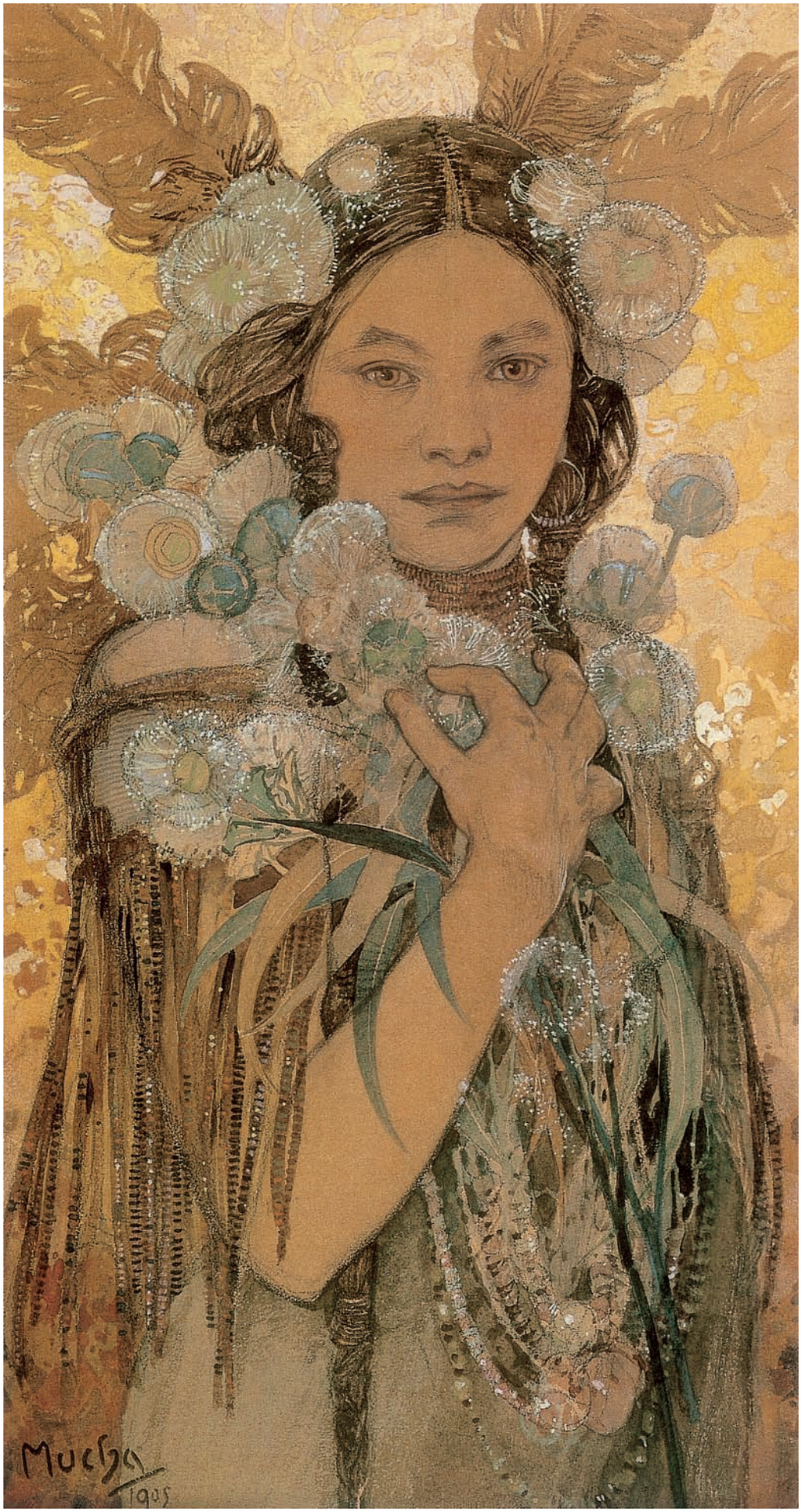
The Gismonda poster brought Mucha not only overnight fame but also financial security in the form of a six-year contract to work for Sarah Bernhardt. A succession of striking posters for La Dame aux Camélias, Lorenzaccio, La Samaritaine, Médée, Tosca, and Hamlet appeared over the next four years.

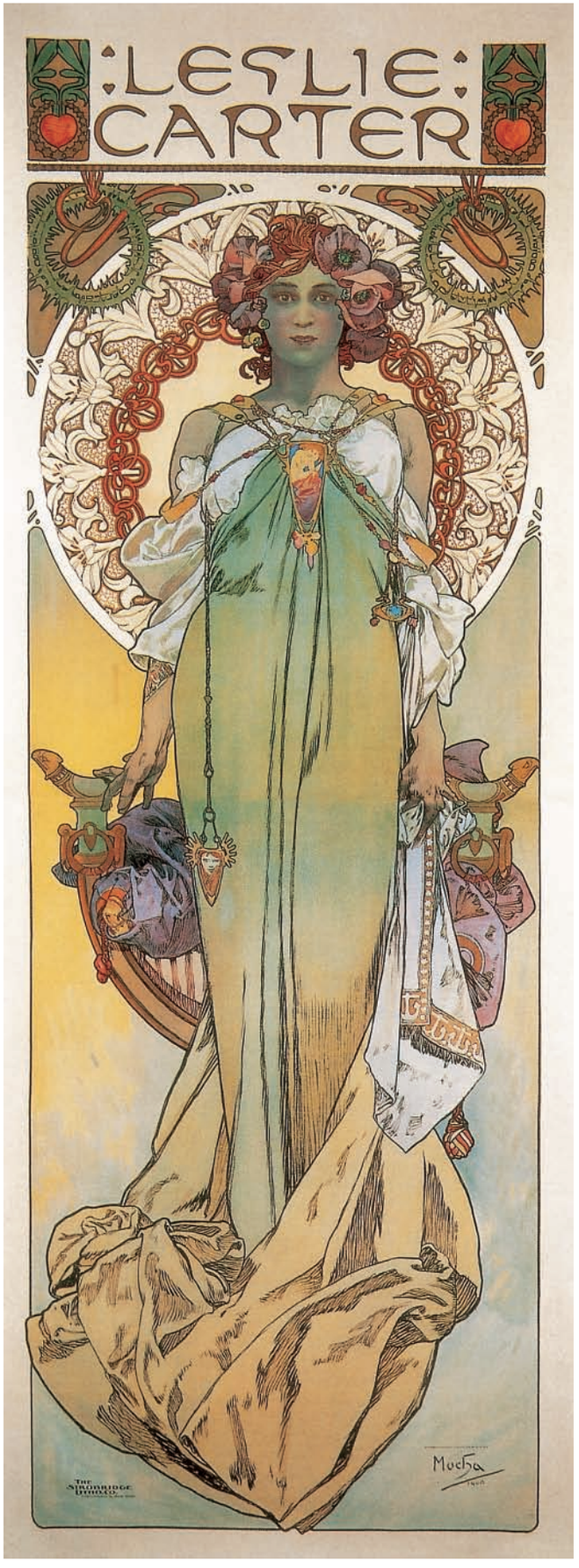
Native American Woman with Flowers and Feathers, 1905.
Pencil, watercolour, and tempera on cardboard, 63 x 48 cm.
Západoèeská Galerie, Plzeò.

Leslie Carter, 1908.
Colour lithograph, 209.5 x 78.2 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 112)

Maude Adams as Joan of Arc, 1909.
Oil on canvas, 208.9 x 76.2 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (p. 112)

Moravian Teachers' Choir, 1911.
Colour lithograph, 106 x 77 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 113)


Mucha
1905


LESLIE
CARTER
Mucha

Mucha
MAUDE ADAMS
AS JOAN OF ARC

PĚVECKÉ SDRUŽENÍ
UČITELSTVA MORAVSKÝCH
Mucha
1911

The Literary Digest

PUBLIC OPINION (New York) combined with THE LITERARY DIGEST

(Title Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.)

FUNK & WAGNALLS COMPANY, Publishers
New York and London

Vol. XXXVI, No. 23. Whole No. 926 NEW YORK, JUNE 6, 1908 Price 10 Cents

Bernhardt agreed to pay Mucha a monthly retainer of 3,000 francs, plus 1,500 francs for each new poster. (Jiri Mucha reckons that Bernhardt made at least 130,000 francs profit on sales of the Gismonda poster alone.) For this money, Mucha was expected to oversee every visual aspect of Bernhardt's theatre productions and to provide designs for sets, costumes, and props, including, on occasion, jewellery.

Mucha's long collaboration with Bernhardt gave him plenty of opportunity to observe her closely, and he left a lengthy verbal description of her that is remarkable for its detailed objectivity that tempers his very evident admiration.

Sarah had a low forehead which she was a little ashamed of and always carefully concealed it with plenty of hair.

Her main object was to emphasise her eyes which were somewhat small in relation to her cheeks and forehead. The shadow under her curls completely filled the depression round her eyes and, with a few deft touches of mascara, eyes that a moment before had been almost expressionless, acquired unexpected depth and the proper dimensions.

In profile, her somewhat wide nose had an exceptionally fine line: its bridge forcefully revealed her artistic independence and personality, a small bump on the ridge showed her fighting qualities, while its interesting termination in a slightly turned-up tip indicated vivid imagination and volatility. Long, narrow nostrils testified to her little-developed, and therefore easily controlled, sensuality.

Her mouth was peculiarly remarkable; the lips were beautifully symmetrical with a clean groove on the upper one; when compressed, they formed an almost straight line, only slightly raised at the corners. In tragic parts she was able to keep them drooping for several hours and convey a completely altered personality. Her lower lip was thrust slightly forward and her firm chin, indicated an exceptionally resolute character.

She preferred to keep her beautiful, long neck covered, right up to the ears, particularly in society, since the neck first gives away age in fine wrinkles which no cosmetics or massage can remove. But on the stage, with artificial light and good make-up – particularly later on in her fifties, when she came into her real beauty – her bare neck and shoulders were magnificent.

The success of his work for Bernhardt brought Mucha numerous other commissions for posters. Following in the footsteps of Cheret, Mucha created an instantly recognisable ideal female type that he used to advertise everything from cigarettes and soap to beer and bicycles. This type lies somewhere between the earthy gaiety of Cheret's blond or

Journalism and Literature, The Literary Digest, 1907. Colour lithograph, 30.4 x 22.8 cm.
Collection of Robert Allan Haas, Kansas City.

Regional Exhibition at Ivanèice 1913, 1912.
Colour lithograph, 93 x 59 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 116)

6th Sokol Festival, 1912.
Colour lithograph, 168.5 x 82.5 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 117)

KRAJINSKÁ VÝSTAVA
V IVANČICÍCH
od 27. července 1913 do 7. září
V. NEUBERTSMICHOV

VI. SLET VŠESOKOLSKÝ
ČESKÉ OBCE SOKOLSKÉ 1912
Mucha
I. SLET SVAZU SLOVANSKÉHO SOKOLSTVA
28. VI. — 1. VII. PRAHA 1912.

red-headed good-time girls with their heavily corseted, hour-glass figures, the morbid refinement and melancholy of the Pre-Raphaelite type, and the sinister allures of the fin-de-siècle femme fatale, combining elements of all three.

A superb and characteristic example is the poster for Job cigarettes.

An image of a young woman smoking was in itself a daring thing at a time when no respectable woman would be seen smoking in public. As late as 1909 the Italian-German composer Ermanno Wolf-Ferrari wrote the charming opera "*Il Segreto di Susanna*" concerning the misadventures of a young woman who attempts to hide from her new husband the guilty secret that she smokes.

The physical type of the girl in the Job poster, with her strong chin and abundant hair derives from the Pre-Raphaelite type created by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The pose with raised head and ecstatically parted lips and half-closed eyes is taken directly from Rossetti's painting *Beata Beatrix*, though Mucha has attempted to disguise his theft by reversing the image.

There is something delightfully irreverent about the way Mucha has transformed Rossetti's visual *Liebestod* into a celebration of the momentary pleasure afforded by a drag on a cigarette. The cheeky insouciance of the Job poster is all the more telling in comparison with the morbid and portentous fusion of orgasm, conception, and death in Munch's lithograph *Madonna*, which also derives from Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*.

The most striking feature of the Job poster is the girl's tentacle-like hair that looks as though it has a life of its own and might reach out to wrap itself round the neck of any passing male. Mucha was one of many fin-de-siècle artists from Rossetti onwards, who were fascinated by the erotic and the threatening aspects of women's hair.

The obsession with women's hair reached epidemic proportions in the late 19th century. This can be laid down partly to the fact that respectable women would no more dream of letting their hair down in public than they would have of lighting up a cigarette, and most men only saw women's hair unleashed in moments of sexual intimacy.

There is more than a hint of the "Fatale" in many of Mucha's images of women and his son Jiri believed that Mucha was influenced by the fashionable misogyny of the fin-de-siècle – in particular by the ideas of his friend August Strindberg. According to Jiri Mucha, his father was wary of women and advised him, "If any woman comes near you, kick her!"

Princess Hyacinthe, 1911.
Colour lithograph, 125.5 x 83.5 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

PRINCEZNA HYACINTA
Mucha
VŠECHNA PRÁVA REPRODUKČNÍ PATENTU ATD. VYHRAZENA.
COPYRIGHT 1911 BY MOJMÍR URBÁNEK DEPOSÉ.
NÁKLADEM MOJMÍRA URBÁNKA V PRAZE.

The Introduction of the Slavonic Liturgy "Praise God in Thy Native Tongue", 1912.
Distemper on canvas, 610 x 810 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

The Slavs in Their Original Homeland "Between the Knout of the Turcs and the Sword of the Goths", 1912.
Distemper on canvas, 610 x 810 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Throughout the late 1890s, Mucha lavished his prodigious powers of invention on the decorative arts. He designed everything from furniture and cutlery to shop fronts, jewellery, and biscuit tins. No task seemed too humble for him to undertake. The organic and curvilinear forms of his style lent themselves particularly well to objects made in metal.

Mucha built up a close working relationship with the jeweller Georges Fouquet, producing numerous designs for brooches and pendants that usually incorporated the typical Mucha girl with her tendrilling hair. The most famous Mucha/Fouquet collaboration was for a bracelet made for Sarah Bernhardt in the form of a bejewelled snake that coiled up her arm in order (according to Jiri Mucha) to disguise her arthritic wrist.

This bracelet not only survives but can be seen as an appropriately sinister ornament in Mucha's poster of Bernhardt in the role of Medea. In 1900, Mucha designed a shop-front for Fouquet that was situated opposite Maxim's, that other temple of Belle Époque pleasures, in the Rue Royale. Mucha's design subsumed swirling metal work, coloured glass, rare woods, and bronzes of peacocks and lovely girls into a "Gesamtkunstwerk" of overwhelming luxury and fantasy.

Mucha's Parisian career reached a climax of frenzied activity with his preparations for the Exhibition Universelle of 1900. This exhibition saw the triumph of the Art Nouveau style and of the electric light bulb, invented less than three decades earlier by Thomas Edison. The Palace of Electricity illuminated by thousands of bulbs was quite literally one of the highlights of the exhibition.

Another was the pavilion of the American dancer Loie Fuller, known as the "Electric Fairy" who managed to combine electric lighting and Art Nouveau in an act in which she leapt around the stage trailing veils from poles in order to create curvilinear patterns.

Soon after, fearing that electric light bulbs might lose their novelty she asked Marie Curie to make her radioactive so that she would be able to glow in the dark without the aid of wires and plugs. Loie Fuller was immortalised by the exquisite Art Nouveau lamps of Raoul Larche and by the slightly tongue-in-cheek lithographs of Toulouse-Lautrec.

For the posters advertising her performances at the Folies Bergère she went to Cheret rather than to Mucha who surely would have been more suited to the task. Nevertheless, Mucha had his hands more than full at around this time. The Austrian government was keen to exploit the prestige of the most famous subject of the Emperor Franz Josef, resident in Paris.

Woman with Burning Candle, 1933.
Oil on canvas, 78 x 79 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

The Abolition of Serfdom in Russia "Free Work – Foundation of States", 1914.
Distemper on canvas, 610 x 810 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (pp. 124-125)

Mucha was invited to select the paintings for the Austrian section of the exhibition (which would include Klimt's controversial ceiling paintings for the University of Vienna).

He was also invited to design a pavilion for the newly-annexed provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In accepting this project, Mucha could have been accused of collaborating in the Habsburg oppression of a fellow Slav people, but he, himself, saw it differently:

Once again I was doing historical painting, but this time not about Germany but a brotherly Slav nation. Describing the glorious and tragic events in its history, I thought of the joys and sorrows of my own country and of all the Slavs. And so, before I had completed the south Slav murals, I had made up my mind about my future big work which was to become 'The Slav Epic' and I saw it as a great and glorious light shining into the souls of all people with its clear ideals and burning warnings.

In addition to his work for the Austrian government, Mucha provided designs for the display of the perfumer Houbigant, and his own work in several different media was represented in various sections of the exhibition.

He also produced designs for a monstrous "Pavilion of Man" adorned with giant female figures that would have been more appropriately named the "Pavilion of the Mucha Woman", and which was intended to replace the Eiffel Tower as the principal monument of Paris. Even though this last project came to nothing it was the moment of Mucha's greatest triumph.

However, looking back on it, he commented, "I cannot rave about these glorious days. My only memory at the mention of the World Exhibition is and will be exhaustion, utter weariness..."

After Art Nouveau reached its zenith in 1900, the vogue for it passed quickly and by the next major international exhibition in Turin in 1902, it was apparent that a reaction had set in.

Art Nouveau was a luxurious and elitist style that, unlike its successor Art Deco, did not lend itself well to cheap imitation and mass production. The seeds of the decline of Art Nouveau lay in the popular successes of 1900.

Mucha's style was a formula that could easily be imitated by lesser talents but with disagreeable results.

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Mucha contributed to the popularisation and vulgarisation of his style by publishing an illustrated book of decorative designs and motifs entitled "Documents Décoratifs". As he

VIENT DE PARAITRE

DOCUMENTS
DÉCORATIFS
PAR
A. M. MUCHA.

Folio from *Ilsée, Princesse de Tripoli*
(detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 30.1 x 24.2 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Folio from *Ilsée, Princesse de Tripoli*
(detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 30.1 x 24.2 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

put it somewhat naively, "The enterprising publishers sold the work to schools and libraries of nearly all the countries of Europe, and I think it made some contribution towards bringing aesthetic values into the arts and crafts."

The predictable result was a plague of plagiarism and during the World Exhibition Mucha was obliged to waste a great deal of time rooting out imitations of his work. "My art was en vogue, it penetrated into the factories and workshops as 'le style Mucha' and various items at the Exhibition were continually being seized to protect the original designs against counterfeiting."

By 1906 it must have become abundantly clear to the artist that "le style Mucha" was passé in fashion-conscious Paris. The year before, the Fauves had exploded upon the Paris art scene at the Salon d'Automne, with a crude and forceful style that must have made Mucha's posters look effete and old-fashioned. The following year Picasso would lay one of the cornerstones of modern art with his revolutionary painting "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon".

Cubism was on the horizon and Futurism too with its slogan of "Kill the Moonlight" and its contempt for everything represented by the fin-de-siècle. It was time for Mucha to leave town and he took himself off to America in search of lucrative portrait commissions and teaching posts. Mucha's years in America until shortly before the First World War were professionally and artistically unsatisfactory.

The ambition to paint the vast canvasses of the Slav Epic was always in the back of his mind. After his definitive return to his homeland in 1910 he devoted the remaining years of his career to this project. Patriotic painting is rarely good painting. Mucha's Slav pictures are not bad paintings – he was always too accomplished for that – but they are curiously lacking in individuality.

With an appropriate change of subject matter they could be by any academically trained and patriotic artist from any part of Europe. Ironically, when Mucha designed his Parisian posters he created a thoroughly personal style, that for all its cosmopolitan roots has an unmistakably, if indefinably, Slavic flavour. Well into the 1920s, though, when required to take up his old métier of designer or illustrator he was capable of reverting to an Art Nouveau style of only slightly diminished curvilinear exuberance.

Mucha died in 1939 at the darkest moment in the history of his people. Ahead lay six years of Nazi tyranny and decades of Soviet-controlled communism. Of one thing though, Mucha always remained convinced; that like grass which has been crushed, the indomitable spirit of the Czech people, which has given the world so much beauty, would rise again.

Poster for *Documents décoratifs, plate 47*, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Conclusion

Art Nouveau was confirmed as a trend in 1900 as a result of the Universal Exposition, which proclaimed the movement's quasi-universal victory.

Art Nouveau meant marvels of joaillerie, bijouterie, silver, glass, mosaics, and ceramics. In the beginning, Art Nouveau was produced by architects and decorators returning to their roots in national traditions (or who simply wished to remain faithful to the same), who were able to derive magnificent and delightful new variations from old domestic themes that had been more or less forgotten.

Art Nouveau was also the work of French architects like Paul Sédille and Jean-Camille Formigé, who (on the heels of their predecessors Henri Labrouste and Emile Vaudremer) eagerly combined novelty with talent, taste, and ingenuity and were able to introduce ornamental iron and ceramic work to the visible structural skeleton of modern construction and homes.

Art Nouveau was the eccentric Barcelona of Gaudí (although notably absent from the 1900 Universal Exposition), which provided Spain with such a colourful and appropriate image.

Art Nouveau was the work of English, Belgian, and American architects, subject neither to classical principles or the imitation of Greek and Italian models, but deeply and completely committed to modern life, who created a solemn, refined style that was not always faithfully copied by their imitators, work that was new and original and usually excellent: a youthful and lively architecture that truly represented their respective countries and time.

Art Nouveau meant pastel-coloured wallpaper, tapestries, and fabrics that made French interiors sing with exquisite harmonies and French walls burst forth with delightful new flora and fauna.

Art Nouveau appeared in the form of illustrated books, such as those decorated by Eugène Grasset, Alphonse-Etienne Dinet, James Tissot, Maurice Leloir, and Gaston de Latenay, in France; Morris and Crane among others, in England; German artists in Berlin and Munich; and Russian artists in Moscow.

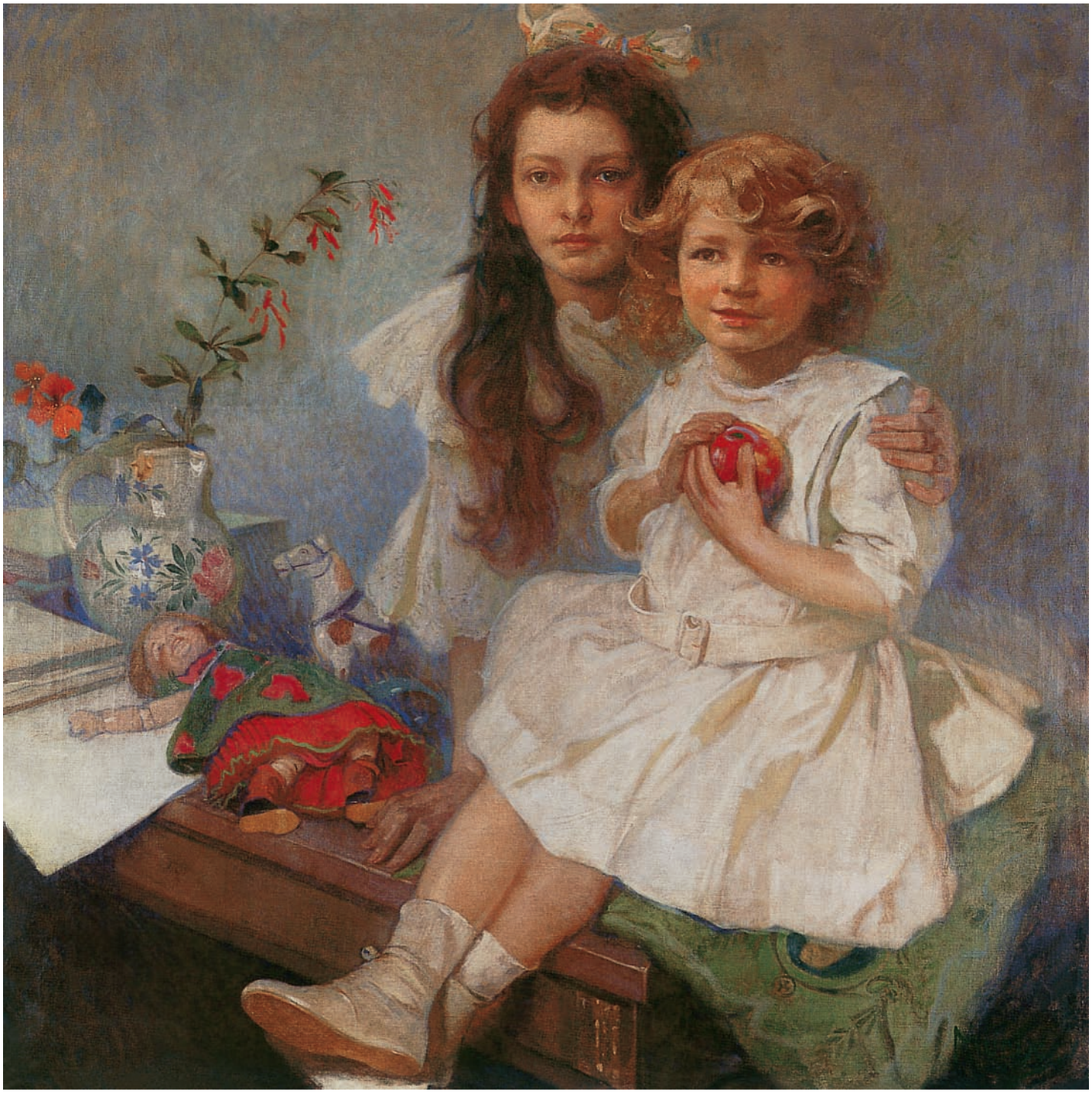
Held in high esteem among a few masters in France, England, and the United States, Art Nouveau was the art of bookbinding.

Art Nouveau was the art of the poster, because posters were needed during this era of insistent advertising. Of course, we refer to the poster as created by Jules Chéret, such as it was and

France Embraces Bohemia, c. 1918.
Oil on canvas, 105 x 122 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Jaroslava and Jiri – the Artist's Children, 1919.
Oil on canvas, 83 x 83 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 134)

Destiny, 1920.
Oil on canvas, 51.5 x 53.5 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague. (p. 135)



continues to be interpreted after him in England, the United States, Belgium, and France by many exceptional artists, including Alphonse Mucha, with imaginative flair: posters displaying delightful whims of colour, harmony, and line, sometimes exhibiting grace and beauty, and posters displaying pyrotechnics, razzle-dazzle, and the use of harsh and brilliant colours.

Art Nouveau was the printmaking of Henri Rivière, respected interpreter of the French and Parisian landscape. In the simplicity of his images, Rivière sometimes applied more truth and more genuine and moving poetry than was available in works of the most famous classical masters, and his wondrous rendering, perfect colour, and eloquent Impressionism, evoke and even surpass the very Japanese works that inspired him.

Art Nouveau was the art of the minor masters of statuettes, whose graceful novelties took the form of delicate figurines shamelessly dangling, crouching, or extending themselves in supple nudity on every imaginable object (such as cups, vases, and desk accessories), as well as more serious works in bronze, marble, and ivory. In France, these masters included the refined Carl Wilhelm Vallgren, Jean-Paul Aubé, Raoul Larche, Agathon Léonard, and Fortini; while Belgium had Charles Samuel; Vienna had Gustav Gurschner and Germany had Mrs Burgev-Hartman.

Within the Art Nouveau movement, French bijouterie had Lalique, while the art of glass had Gallé and Tiffany. Gallé's now-acknowledged gifts went well beyond mere talent into the realm of genius and extraordinary ingenuity. The arduous efforts and frequently beautiful execution of Plumet and Selmersheim, Majorelle, Gaillard, de Feure, and Colonna also deserve mention.

Art Nouveau was the furniture of Van de Velde and Horta: the desks and chairs that had plant feet, the dressers and buffets perfectly fused with the architecture that they coordinated with. In furnishings (already often expertly handled), it was the new library of the open bookcase that held (in addition to books) bibelots, figurines, and items of ceramic and glass that were as vital sustenance for the eyes as books were to the mind.

1918-1928: Poster for the 10th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, 1928. Colour lithograph, 121 x 83.5 cm. The Mucha Trust Collection.

Hearst's International, Cover for December 1921, 1921. Colour print, 33 x 24 cm. Collection of Robert Allan Haas, Kansas City. (p. 138)

Hearst's International, Cover for January 1922, 1921. Colour print, 33 x 24 cm. Collection of Robert Allan Haas, Kansas City. (p. 139)

What was even more outstanding and typical of the new style (and what became and remains standard), was the English wardrobe with full-length mirror and the fully-designed and decorated bathroom interior, including another English novelty that would become standard: the mirrored étagère similar to chimney glass. Here the exquisite work of Charpentier and Aubert also comes to mind: for example, their decorative ceramic wall covering depicting water blooms with a frieze of slender nude bathers.

Art Nouveau was the decoration of the fireplace and mantle framed in glazed brick or tile, wood, bright copper, or onyx, which was most effectively conceived and executed by the English.

Then there was the period's innovation in lighting, the illumination of interiors that in the past had often been too dark and too heavily draped. Here Art Nouveau is associated

1918
1928

HEARST'S
INTERNATIONAL
For December
35 Cents
Mucha

HEARST'S
INTERNATIONAL
For
January
35 Cents

The Months Postcard: *March*, 1899. Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm. The Mucha Trust Collection.

with truly magical applications of electricity (yet to be thoroughly exhausted), which was definitely a boon to the movement. Electricity lent itself to all lighting needs and already necessitated a transformation in lamps, which was handled with great creativity in Germany, England, and the United States, where in the hands of Tiffany the lamp was transformed into a variety of configurations, forms, and lighting. Interiors might therefore be enchantingly lit by opaque glass skilfully and softly coloured to take on the appearance of onyx, jade, and rare stones and at the same time have Tiffany Favrile

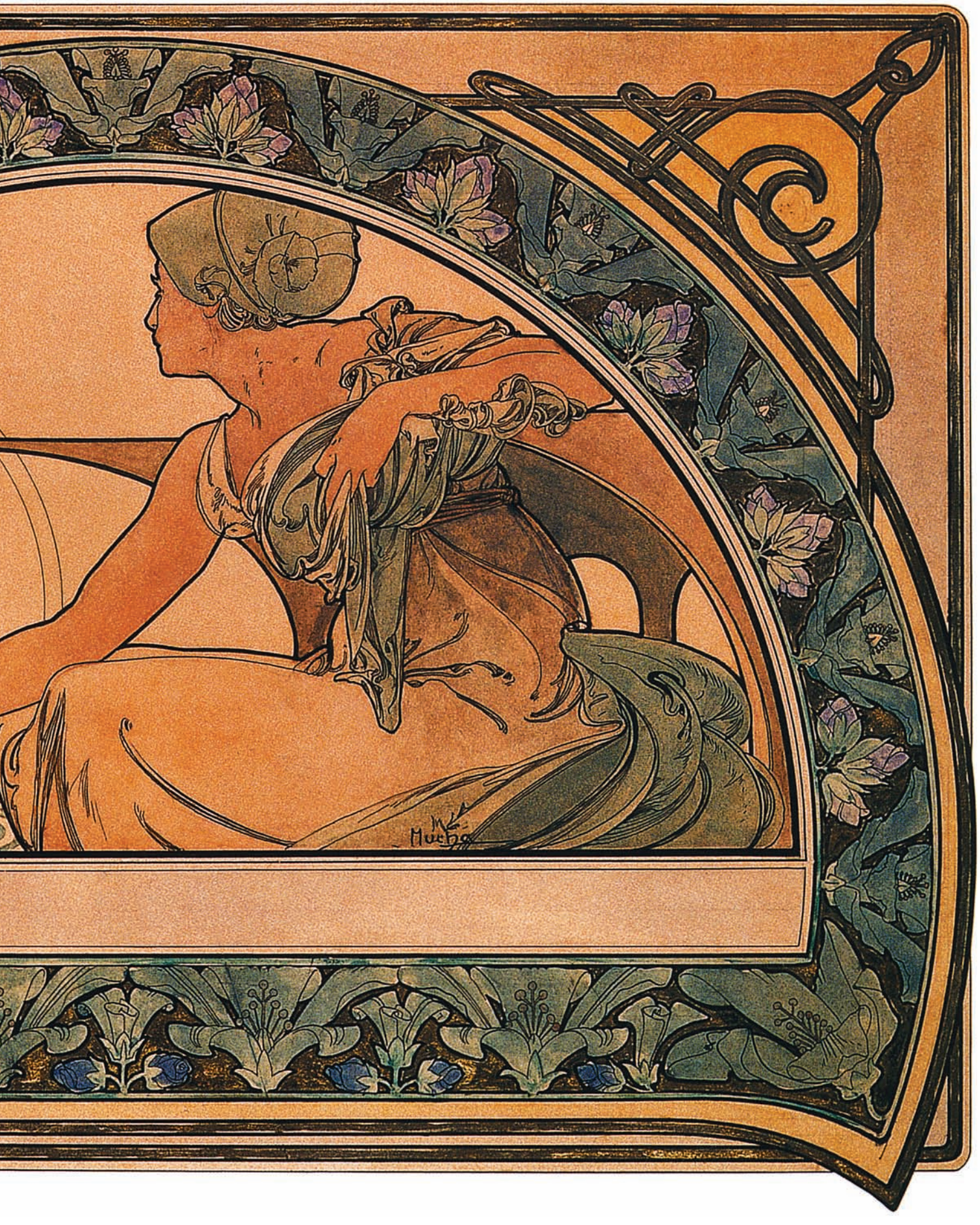
glass and lamps by Gallé or Daum adding their own charming illumination and magical iridescence to the mix.

Art Nouveau is the sum of all these artists. Their names alone evoke the period, so beloved by our modern cities, which decisively broke with the past and enabled art to undergo renewal: a renewal preserved forever in the words Art Nouveau – and what greater honour could an artistic movement have than to be eternally new?

The Months Postcard: *April*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, diameter 8.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Water Lily, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 39 x 54 cm.
Private collection.

Woman with Poppies, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 63 x 45 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 144)


Mucha

Toutes les Œuvres
DE MUCHA
sont en Vente
a
"LA PLUME"
31, Rue Bonaparte.
Mucha
F. Champenois, Paris.

WORKS

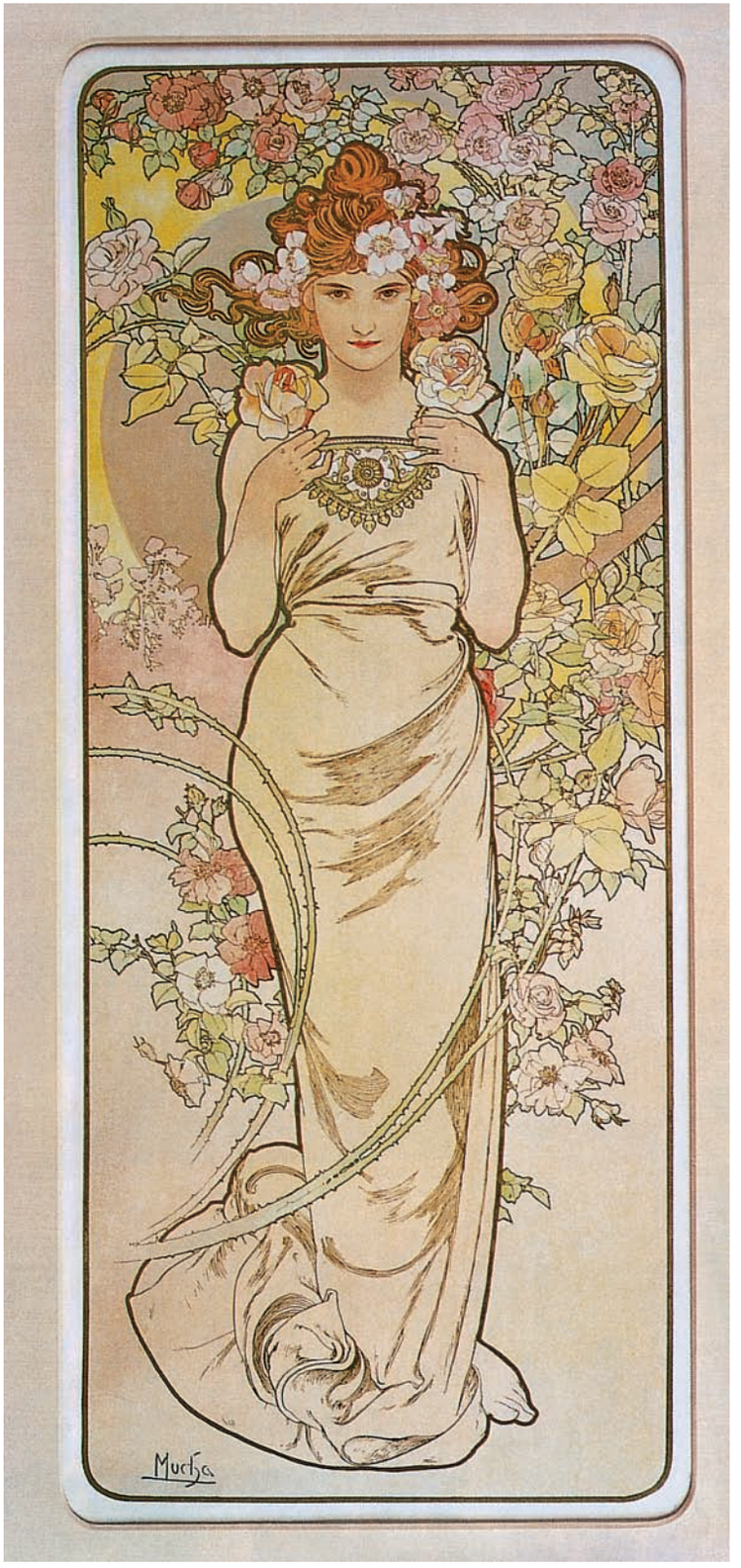
Dance (From the *Arts* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 60 x 38 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Mucha

Painting (From the *Arts* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 60 x 38 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

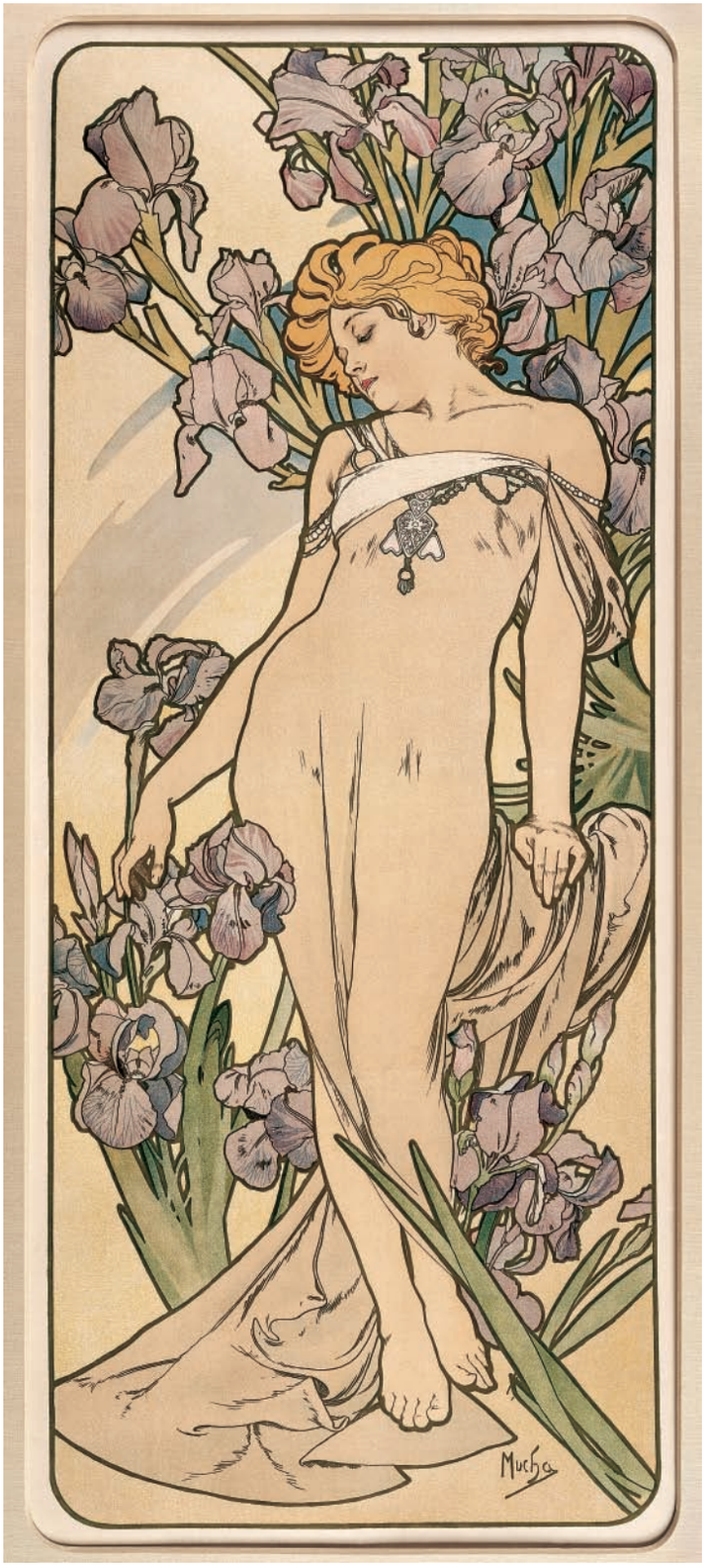
Poetry (From the *Arts* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 60 x 38 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Lily (from the *Flowers* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



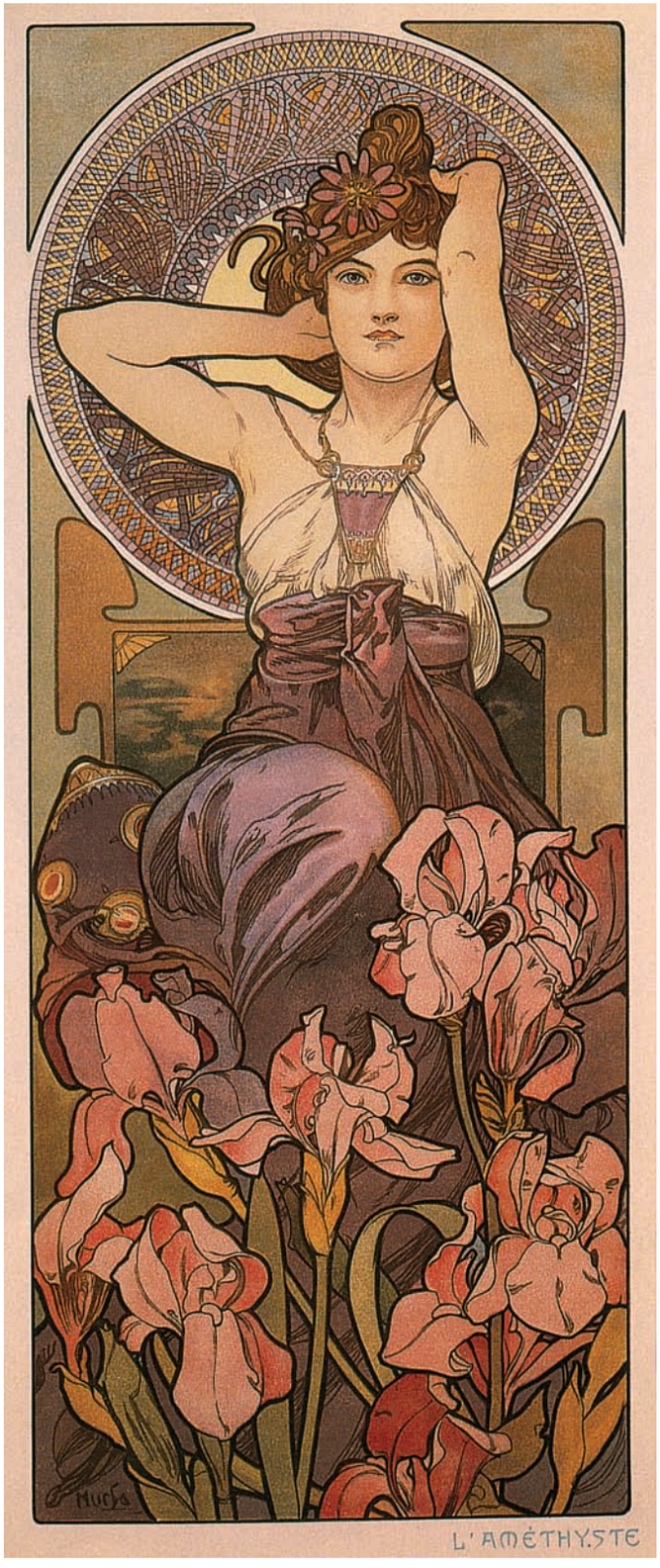
Rose (from the *Flowers* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Carnation (from the *Flowers* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Iris (from the *Flowers* series), 1898.
Colour lithograph, 103.5 x 43.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

The Precious Stones: Emerald, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 67.2 x 30 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



The Precious Stones: Amethyst, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 67.2 x 30 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

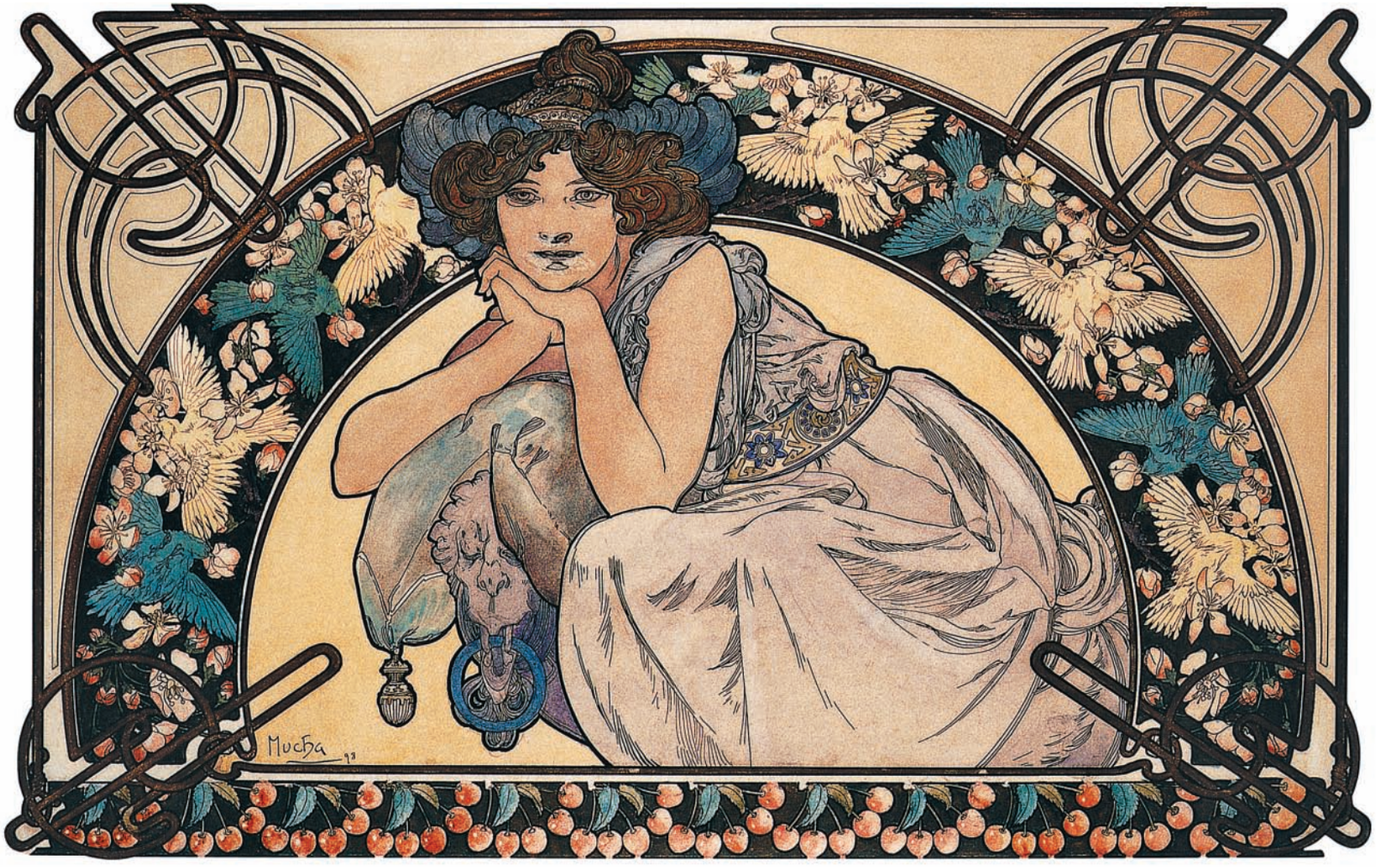
The Precious Stones: Topaz, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 67.2 x 30 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

The Precious Stones: Ruby, 1900.
Colour lithograph, 67.2 x 30 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Ivy, 1901.
Colour lithograph, 53 x 39.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Laurel, 1901.
Colour lithograph, 53 x 39.5 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Designs for *The Months*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 9.4 x 28 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



Cherry Blossom, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 34 x 51 cm.
Private collection.

Flirt, c. 1895-1900.
Colour lithograph, 61.6 x 27.6 cm.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles.

Warner's Rust Proof Corsets, 1909.
Colour lithograph, 264 x 100 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Heather from Coastal Cliffs, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 74 x 35 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

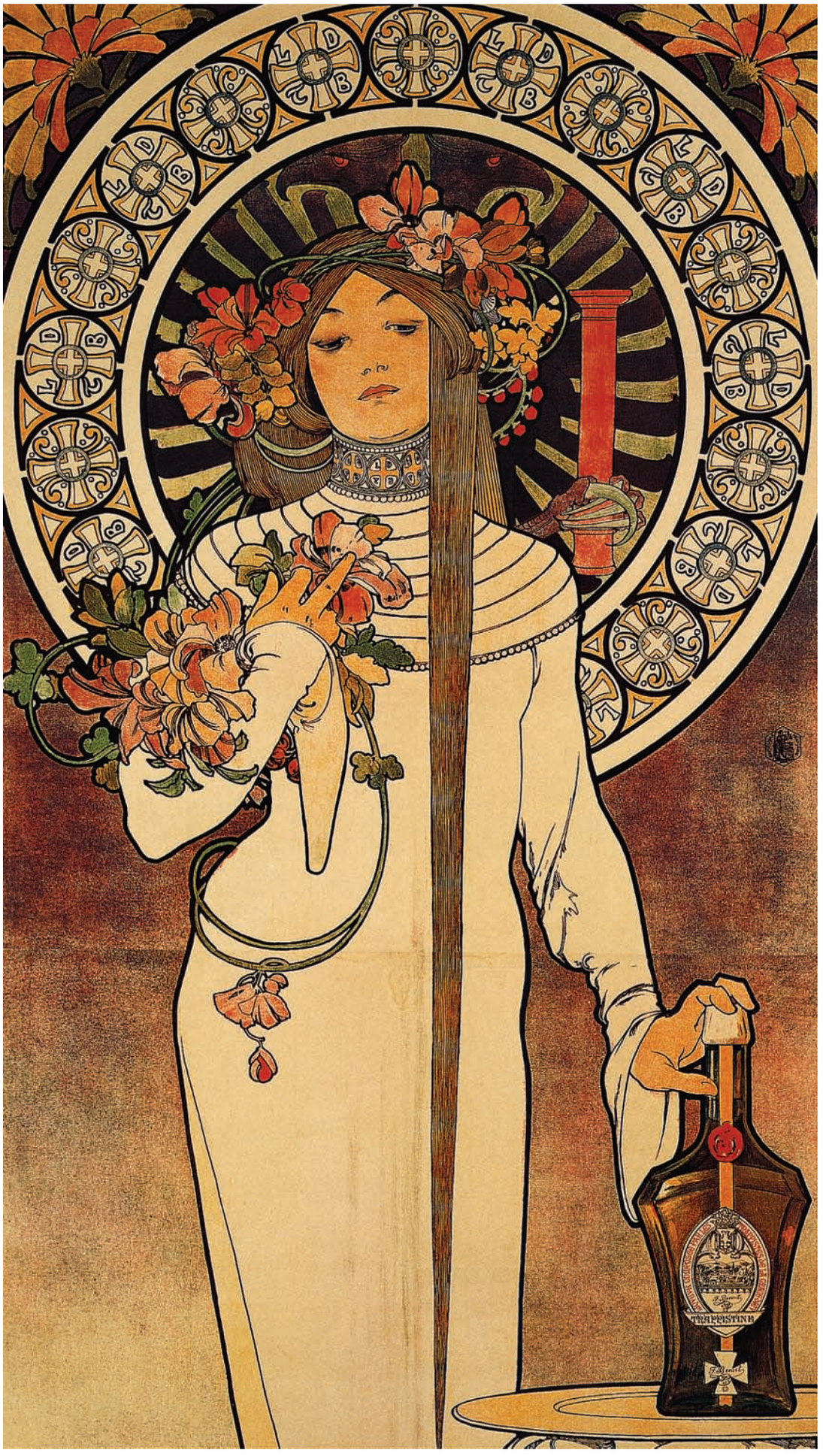
Thistle from the Sands, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 74 x 35 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Moët & Chandon – Champagne White Star, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 60 x 20 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Moët & Chandon – Dry Impérial, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 60 x 20 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Champagne Ruinart, 1896.
Colour lithograph, 173 x 59 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Bénédictine, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 200 x 71 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.



La Trappistine (detail), 1897.
Colour lithograph, 201 x 70 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Chocolat Idéal, c. 1897.
Colour lithograph, 86.4 x 54.8 cm.
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra. (p. 163)

CHOCOLAT IDÉAL
en
Poudre
Soluble
CHOCOLAT
PUR CACAO ET
CHOCOLA
IDÉAL
POUDRE SOLUE
Qualité Surfine
6 Chocolat IDÉAL 0,90c
TASSES
Donne P'tit' Maman!
Mucha
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS.
66, Bd St MICHEL, PARIS.
COMPAGNIE FRANÇAISE DES CHOCOLATS ET DES THÉS

L'illustration, 1896.
Magazine cover, 39 x 29 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Hamlet, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 207.5 x 76.5 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

La Tosca, 1899. Colour lithograph, 103 x 36 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Sketch for Lefèvre-Utile biscuit box with scene of Naples, 1897.
Private collection.

Sketch for Lefèvre-Utile biscuit box with scene of Venice, 1897.
Private collection.

Cover from *Au Quartier Latin*, 1898.
Colour lithograph, 44 x 31 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

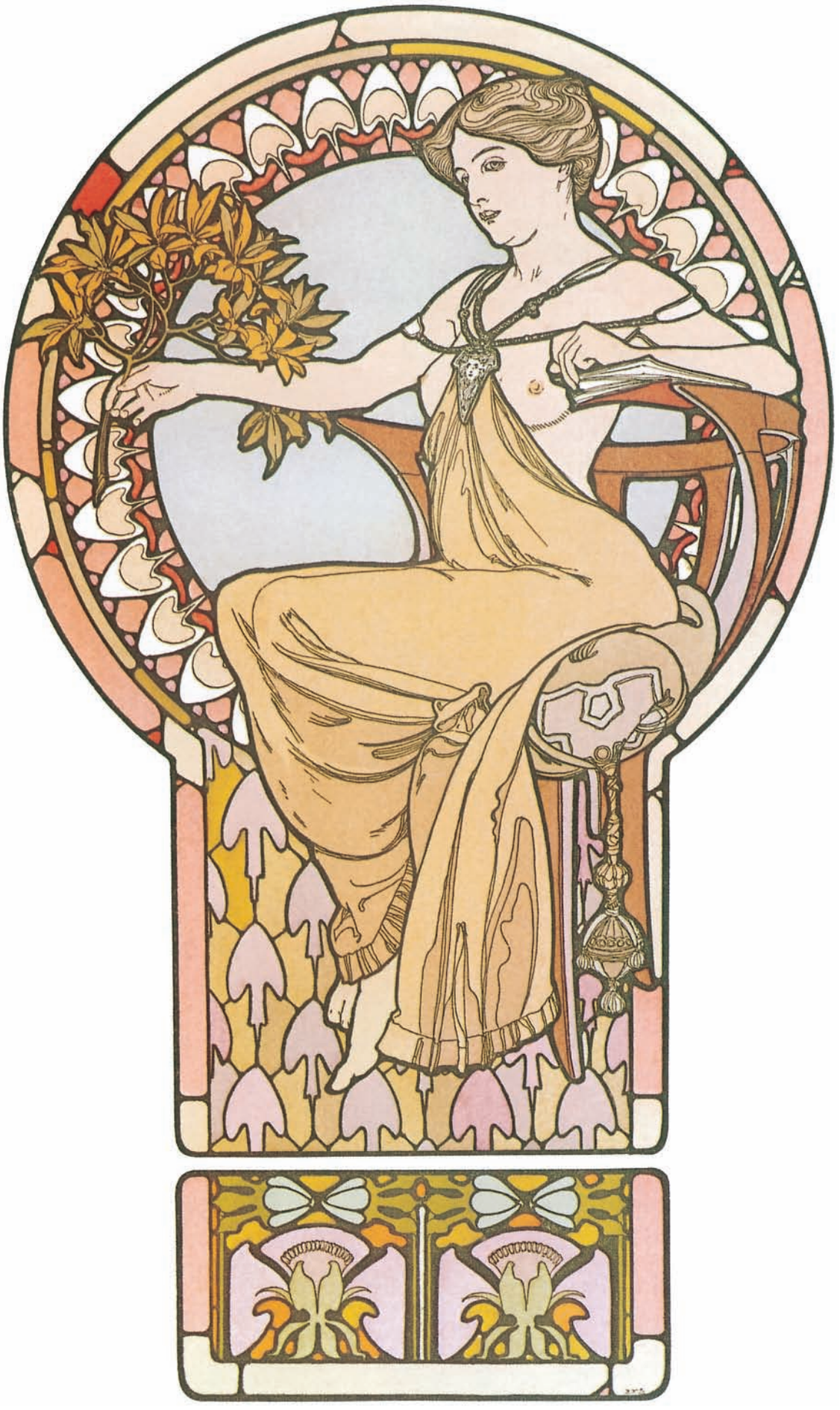
Folio from *Le Pater*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 33 x 25 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Cover from *Le Pater*, 1899.
Colour lithograph, 33 x 25 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 169)

LE PATER
COMMENTAIRE ET COMPOSITIONS
DE
A. M. MUCHA
F. CHAMPENOIS
IMPRIMEUR-ÉDITEUR
66, Bd S.-MICHEL, PARIS
H. PIAZZA & Cie
« L'ÉDITION D'ART »
4, RUE JACOB, PARIS

Société Populaire des Beaux Arts (detail), 1897.Colour lithograph, 61.5 x 45 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

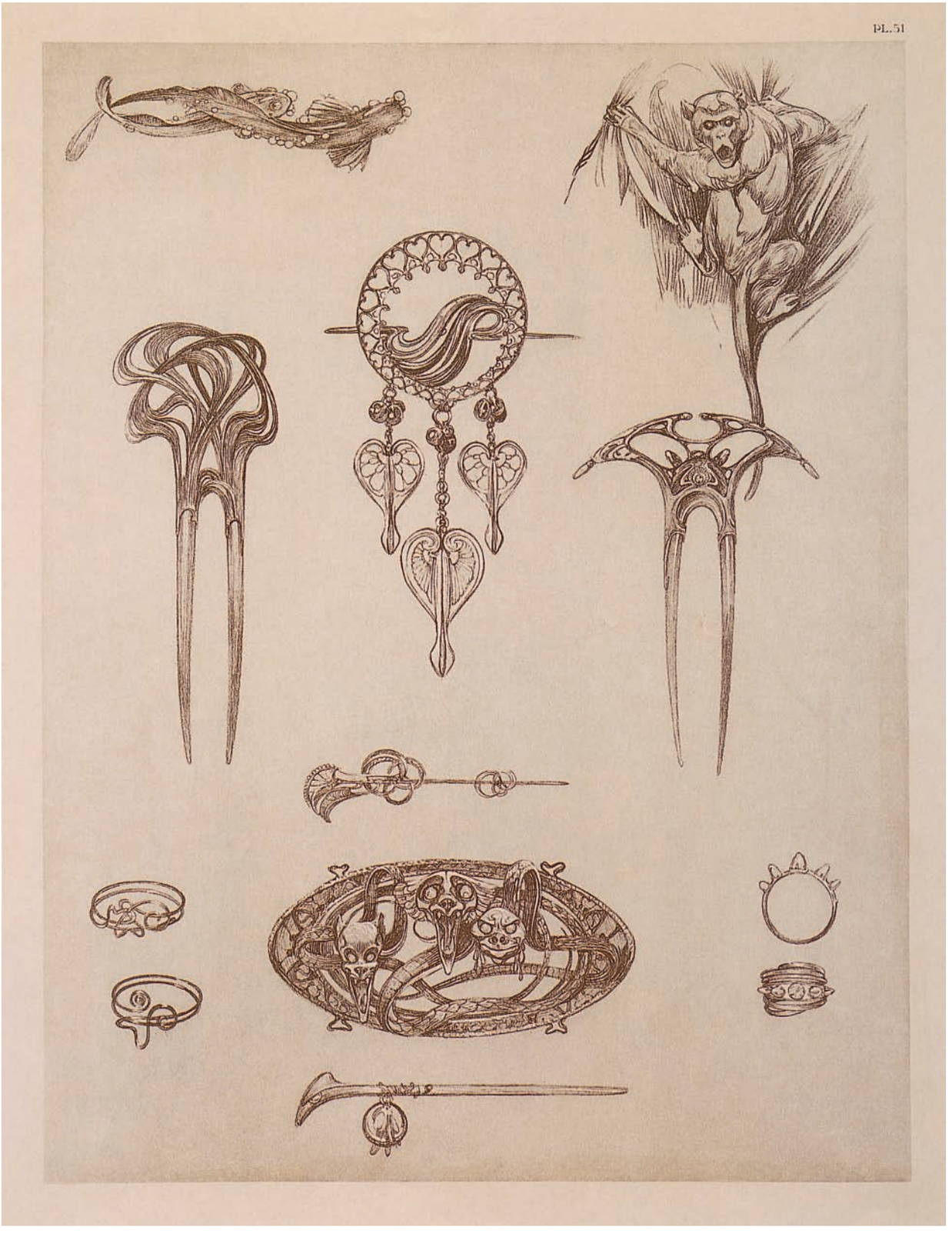
Drawing for the Thanksgiving cover of Collier's magazine, 1922.
Private collection.



Poster for *Documents décoratifs*,
plate 15, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*, plate 19, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Drawing for *Documents décoratifs*, Board 49, 1902.
Pencil and white highlights on paper, 39 x 51 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.



Documents décoratifs, Board 51, 1902.
Lithograph, 33 x 46 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Nature, 1899-1900.
Bronze and amethyst, 70 x 28 x 27 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Head of a Girl, 1900.
Bronze, silver, and parcel gilt,
29 x 22 x 10 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection. (p. 177)

Adaptation from *Documents Décoratifs*, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

Documents décoratifs, 1902.
Colour lithograph, 46 x 33 cm.
The Mucha Trust Collection.

SALON DES CENT
Juin 1897
31 rue Bonaparte
Exposition de l'Œuvre
de
A. MUCHA
AFFICHES ARTISTIQUES DE LA PLUME, 31, RUE BONAPARTE, PARIS.
IMP. F. CHAMPENOIS. PARIS.
Mucha

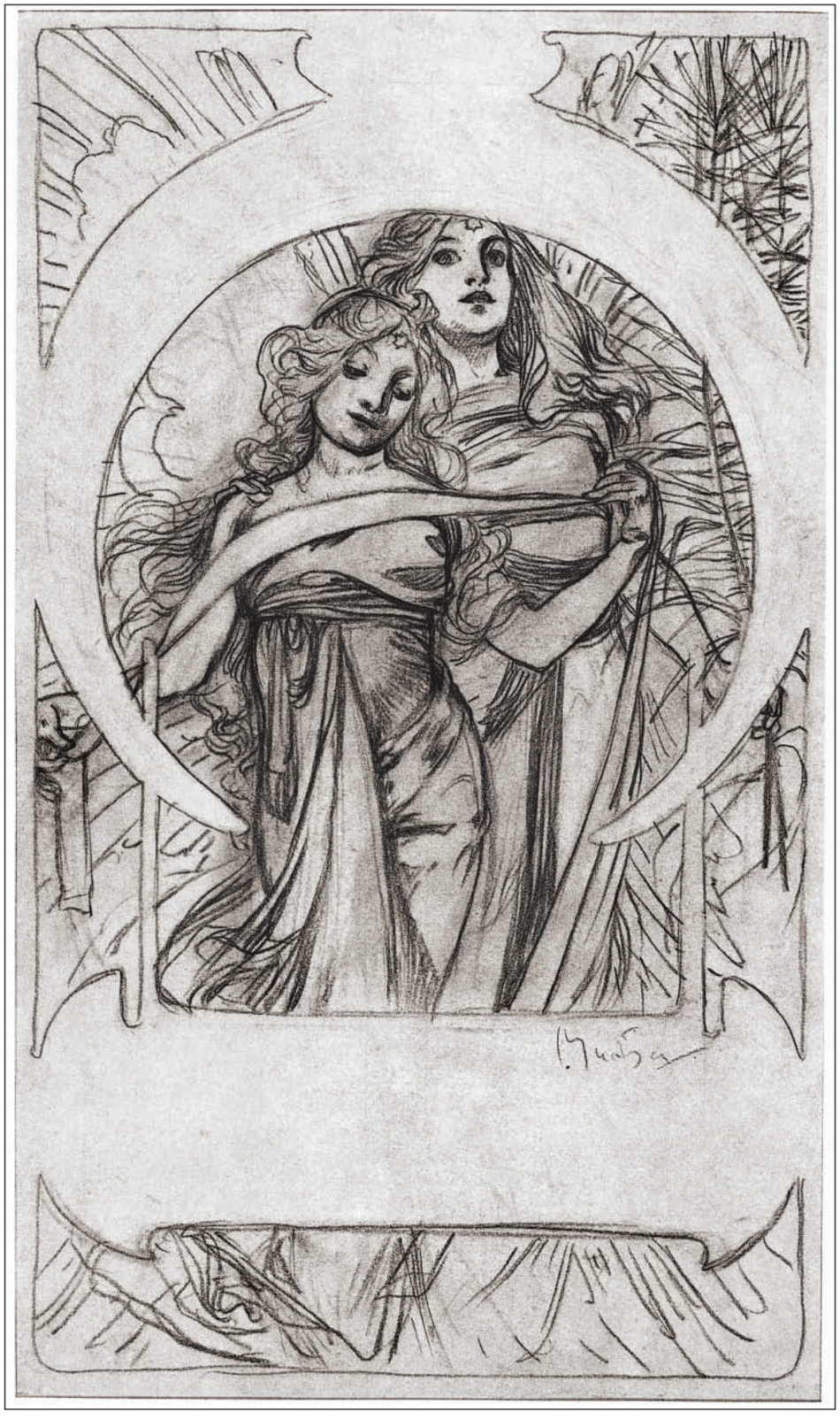
GRAPHIC WORKS

Lithographed poster for Mucha's show at the Salon des Cent, 1897. Drawing. (p. 180)

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*, plate 25, 1902.
Lithographic plate, 46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Poster for *Documents décoratifs*,
plate 24, 1902.
Lithographic plate,46 x 33 cm.
Mucha Museum, Prague.

Sketch for an illustration in the book *Ilsée, Princesse de Tripoli,* 1897.



Cover sketch for the magazine *L'Age d'Art*, 1898. Drawing.

Cover sketch for the magazine *Zlatá Praha*, 1890s. Drawing.

Sketch for a calendar, 1898.

Sketch for the book *Le Pater*, 1899.

Sketch for a calendar, 1900.

Girl under a lampshade. Advertisement for "*Lucilne*",
late 1890s. Sketch.

Study for a *panneau décoratif*, 1900.
Sketch.

Biography

1860 Alphonse Mucha was born on 24th July in Ivancice, Moravia, a province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was the son of a court usher and was brought up in keeping with the virtues of nationalism. He began to draw at a young age.

1871 Mucha was a chorister at the Saint-Peter's Cathedral in Brno, where he received his secondary school education. It is there that he had his first revelation, in front of the richness of Baroque art. During the four years of studying there, he formed a friendship with Leos Janácek who would become the greatest Czech composer of his generation.

1877 He failed to enter the Academy of Art in Prague.

1879 Mucha found work as an auxiliary in a firm of theatre designers in Vienna.

1881 Following a fire which ravaged the Ringtheatre (the main client of the firm where he worked) Mucha was dismissed from his job as a designer. He settled in the small town of Mikulov where he drew portraits. There he met his first patron, Count Khuen, who invited him to decorate his castle with painted murals.

1885 Mucha studied art in Munich whilst carrying out work for Count Egon, brother of Count Khuen, in Tyrol.

1887 He moved to Paris, a city excited at the forthcoming Exposition Universelle. Mucha entered the Julian Academy where he met the Nabis group: Sérusier, Vuillard, Bonnard, and Denis, but also Gauguin, with whom he shared

a studio in 1893. He joined the Symbolist movement led by Puvis de Chavannes, Redon, Moreau, and Huysmans.

1889 He drew his first illustrations for the reviews.

1894 Mucha created Gismonda, his first poster for the actress Sarah Bernhardt and entered into a six-year contract with her. This turning point in his life put him on the path to a career in decorating boards.

1900 He planned different pavilions for the Exposition Universelle, among which was the Bosnian-Herzegovinian. He worked at the same time for Fouquet jewellers. This brought him projects for his boutique.

1904 Mucha left to settle in the United States.

1910 He returned definitively to his homeland and decided to dedicate himself to the painting of patriotic frescoes and to elaborate a collection named The Slav Epic.

1928 Mucha donated the twenty paintings of The Slav Epic to the Czech people and the City of Prague.

1936 An exhibition was dedicated to him as well as to his compatriot Frantisek Kupka at the Real Games Gallery.

1939 Alphonse Mucha died of pneumonia on 14th of July.

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Born in 1860 in a small Czech town, Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939) was an artist on the forefront of Art Nouveau, the modernist movement that swept Paris in the 1910s, marking a return to the simplicity of natural forms, and changing the world of art and design forever. In fact, Art Nouveau was known to insiders as the "Mucha style" for the legions of imitators who adapted the master's celebrated tableaux. Today, his distinctive depictions of lithe young women in classical dress have become a pop cultural touchstone, inspiring album covers, comic books, and everything in between. Patrick Bade and Victoria Charles offer readers an inspiring survey of Mucha's career, illustrated with over one hundred lustrous images, from early Parisian advertisements and posters for Sarah Bernhardt, to the famous historical murals painted just before his death, at the age of 78.